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The
GUIDING
PILLAR

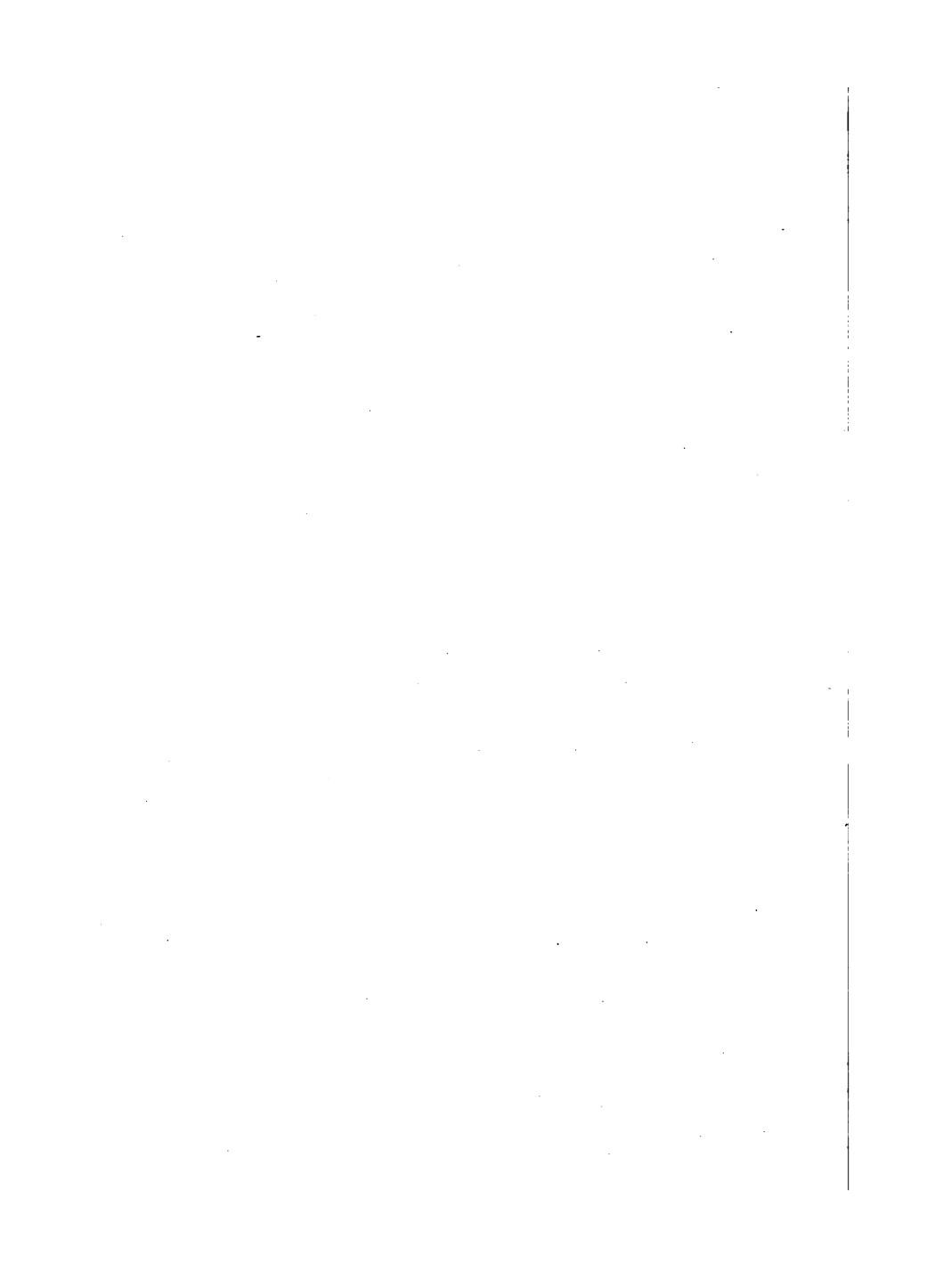




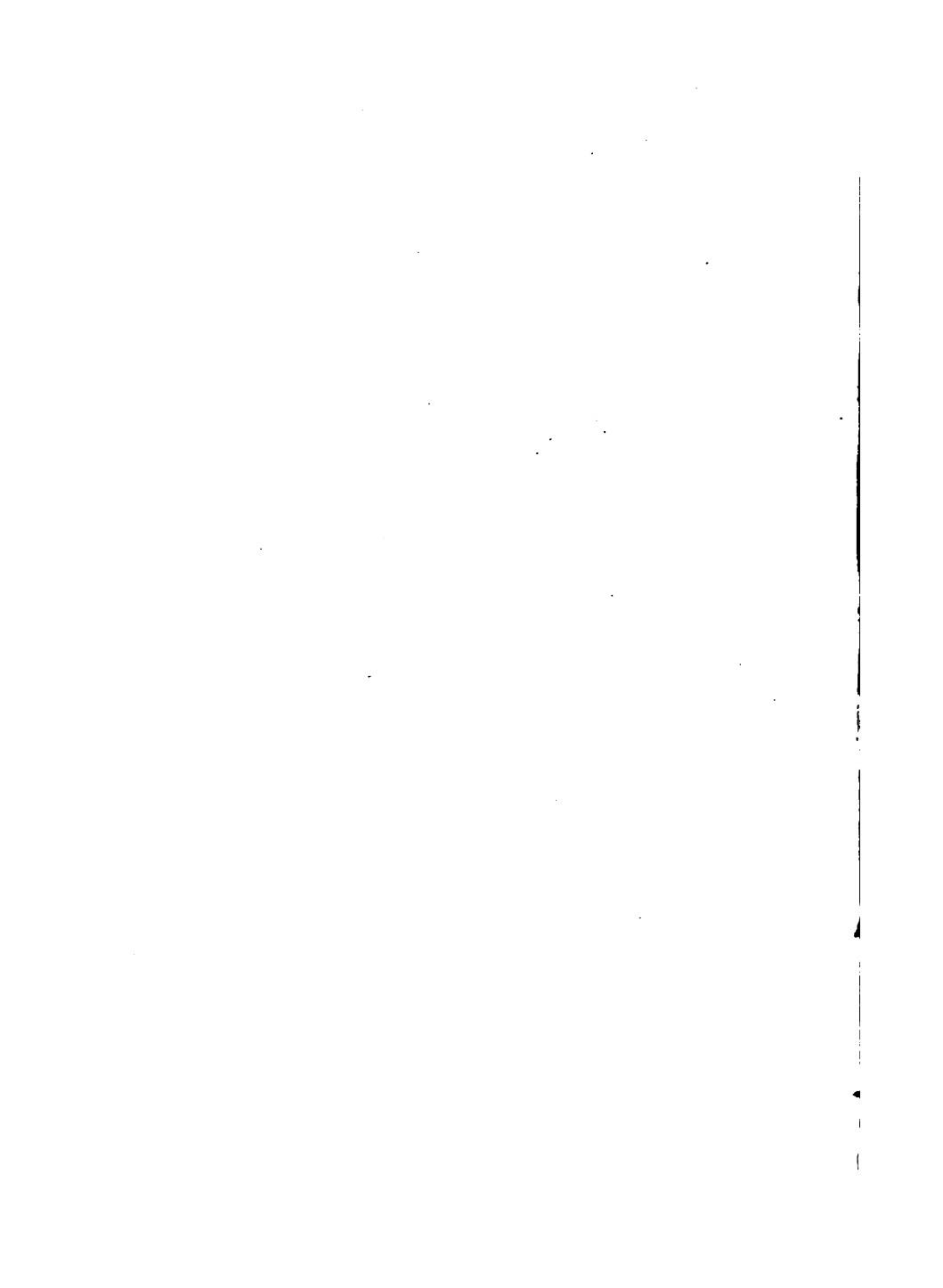
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THE GUIDING PILLAR.







PANSY'S INTERVIEW WITH HER GRAND-UNCLE.

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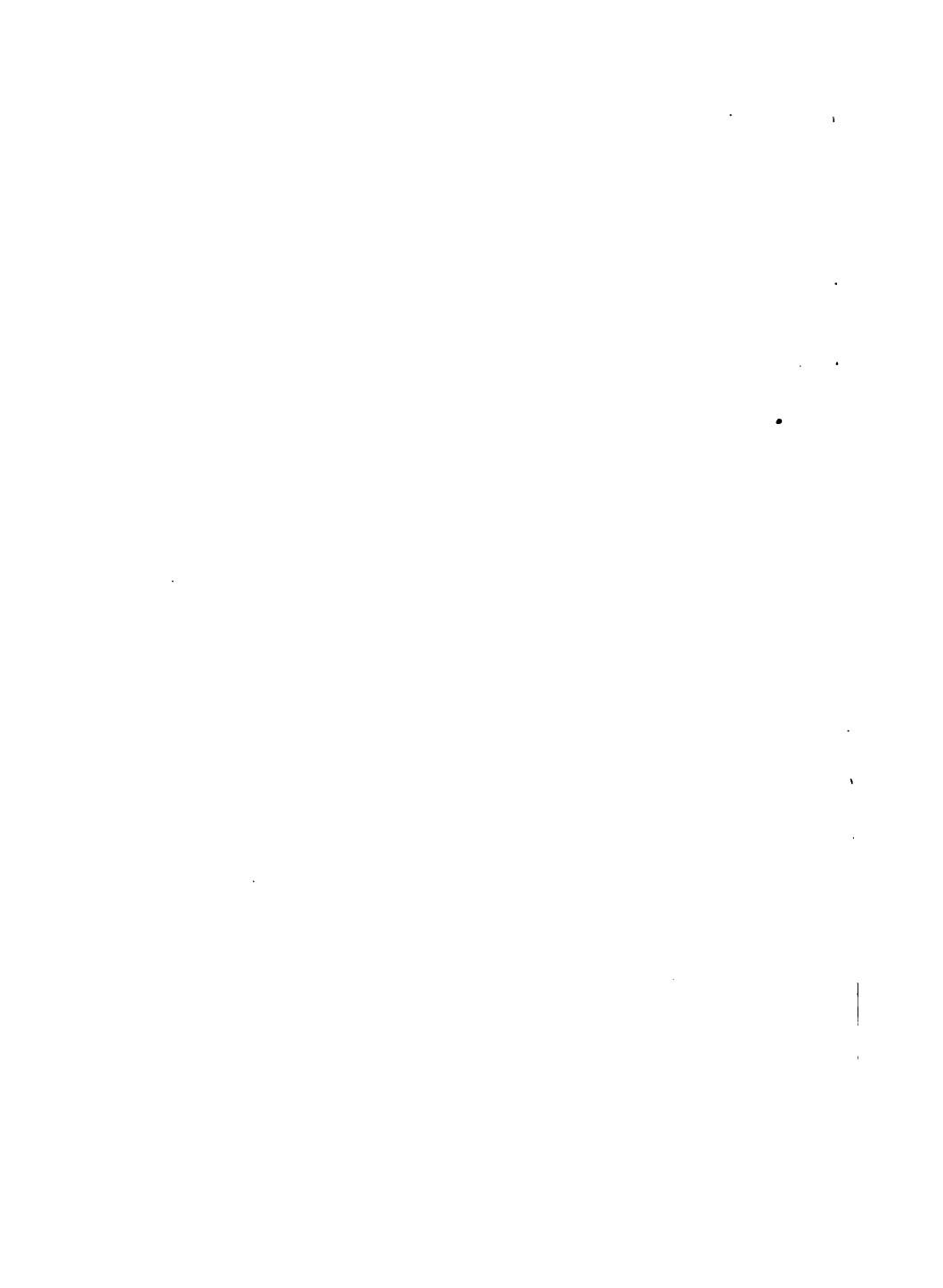
ILLAR.

"*BY LOVE.*"



ESTER BOW;
RK;

8



THE GUIDING PILLAR.

A Story for the Young.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
“UNDER THE OLD OAKS; OR, WON BY LOVE.”

“Yes; full before us all the while
The shadowy pillar stays,
The living waters brightly smile,
The eternal turrets blaze.”



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down the little sloping garden which led to the gate where the speaker stood, holding high above his head a small wicker basket, looking all the while with an arch smile at a couple of the prettiest little two-year-old girls, who had twined their arms around his knees, and were making frantic appeals to be taken up into their victim's arms. Old friends they were, it was evident; and good ones too, despite the young lad's pretended fear. "There now, Stanley," said the girl as she came to the rescue, and took one little plump curly-headed creature into her arms, "when shall I be able to convince you that the babes are *not* exactly alike? If only you look closely, you will see that Clara's eyes are a shade darker than Ethel's, and her eyelashes longer; and you know you are not frightened at them one bit, the pets;" and as she spoke she stooped and lifted the other little one up also.

"Now, now," said the lad, "that won't do, Pansy—enough is as good as a feast; let me have one of them, if you're quite sure it won't bite;" and putting down his basket on a grassy bank inside the garden gate, he gently took one of the little twins from her sister's arms, and perched it firmly on his shoulder; then taking the basket in his hand, walked quickly up to the porch.

A tall good-looking lad of some twenty summers he was, with deep-set thoughtful eyes, a well-formed nose, a mouth at once pleasing and firm, and dark brown curly hair.

When they reached the porch the twins were released, and twining their arms round each other's necks, were soon rolling about on the grass. The two stood silent for a minute or so, watching the children at their play. Then Stanley spoke,—

“How is Mr. Stanford this morning?”

A shade fell on the girl's face as she answered, “O Stanley, I hardly know; but he appears weaker every day, and the fear I have for weeks trembled to put in words is now almost certainly confirmed. My father is turning blind!”

“Pansy! what do you mean? Why, if you have been fearing this, bearing this sad trial, have you not shared it with your best friends sooner? Something must be done at once. You may be wrong; weakness often dims the sight, and”—but the rest of the sentence remained unfinished, for the look of deep grief on his companion's face spoke of certainty.

“No, Stanley,” she said, “I am not wrong; my father himself told me yesterday that it was so. His brush is laid aside; the picture he was so keen to send to the Academy next month remains unfinished.

Weakness may in some way be the cause, but I fear the worst; and why should I vex others with a burden which weighs me down?"

"Nay, Pansy"—and the lad laid his hand kindly on the girl's shoulder—"are we not told to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ? You know the great Burden-bearer, but it becomes you not to slight your earthly friends, who would gladly do their part to lighten any burden of yours. Take care, Pansy, that love of independence does not turn to pride. Let us help you for your father's sake; better medical advice may do good."

At these words the girl winced as if some tender wound had been touched.

"Yes, I know," she replied quickly. "I must see to that," and two large tear-drops fell as she spoke; for deep down in her heart lay the consciousness that their slender means could not obtain that aid.

"Let me tell my father, Pansy, and see what he thinks can be done."

"Mr. Vernon knows it already. My father sent for him this morning, and had a long conversation with him."

"And Harry—does he know?"

"Yes, now he does. O Stanley! it was sad to see his look of pain as he said, 'How I would like to

take my father's place of bread-winner, and toil for him and you all; but what can a crippled, sickly fellow like me do, save add to the burden?' But you know that is not the case; we would all do what we could for Harry, he is so unselfish and noble-hearted. And indeed, Stanley, he has great talent, if only he were stronger; his painting of heads is really wonderful for so young a boy, and his likenesses so good: still he is only thirteen years old, and a confirmed invalid." Again that sad look fell over the girl's face; but she threw it off, and raising her head proudly, said, "But, after all, I daresay we will get on well; and at all events we must try."

"Yes," said the lad; "you, a child, will work, toil, and slave for father, brothers, and sisters, and succeed in overtaking your strength till you too will be laid aside."

"Hush," she said, "are you becoming a croaker like old Mr. Edmunds? Do I look like one to be so easily crushed?" Then lowering her voice, she said, "I know you mean kindly, Stanley; but I can't see my way to trouble our friends; my father would accept no assistance. The path is a dark one just now." Then changing her tone, the girl looked up: "Stanley, did you ever wish you had lived in the days of the guiding pillar? I do so wish there was

one now, then we could make no mistake; in following it we would be sure we were following the path God designs us to do. Oh, if only we had it now!"

"Pansy, we *have*," replied her companion; "as certainly as in the days of old, God leads his people and guides them. We *have* the pillar, if only we take the right way to see it."

"How can we?"

"Put on the magic spectacles."

"Stanley, you are joking—and on such a subject!"

"Nay, Pansy, I joke not. The magic spectacles of faith enable us even now to see in every little event of life the guiding hand of our God, as distinctly as the Israelites saw the pillar of cloud and fire. I know it, for I have tried them. Every event in our daily life is seen to be God's way of leading us, when we put on these spectacles. Do you remember Elisha and his servant at Dothan—how the one saw only the horses and chariots of the enemy surrounding the mountain, but the other saw also the horses and chariots of the Lord protecting them? What made the difference? Elisha had on the magic spectacles of faith, the other at first had not. You should read Krummacher on that, Pansy."

A loud cry from little Clara interrupted the con-

versation, and Pansy darted off to comfort her, and if possible prevent the cry from disturbing her father.

Just then a fair-haired boy of eight years ran up the garden path, shouting out in boyish glee, "A half-holiday, hurrah ! Mr. Vernon examined us for a couple of hours, and was so pleased, he asked Mr. Durrard to let us have the rest of the day to ourselves. Isn't it jolly, Pansy ? "

So appealed to, the girl tried to look pleased, but the very thought of her wild little brother being thrown idle on her hands for some extra hours in his father's feeble state of health appalled her; but Stanley came to her rescue.

"Come, Charlie," he said; "suppose you come off and spend some hours with me in the woods. See, I have got my botany case, and I want just such a little climbing fellow as you to help me. We'll take our dinner in our pockets, and not be back till evening. There now, I see by Pansy's eyes she approves the scheme; so walk quietly in-doors and leave your books; tell Harry you are going, and join me here."

Pansy's eyes did indeed speak her gratitude. "You won't let him tease you?" she said; "it will be a great relief to have him in safe keeping for a bit. Poor Charlie, it is dull for him at home."

They had strolled down to the gate, the twins

clinging to her lovingly. A pretty picture they made, with the summer sunshine falling through the green leaves and playing on the girl's dark hair. No wonder that the lad's eyes loved to rest on that face, for Pansy was a beautiful girl,—“queenly,” people called her: her real name was Selina, but the violet colour of her large eyes had procured for her the pet name of Pansy. Wonderful eyes they were: now brimful of fun; then again, as some more serious thoughts came into her mind, they changed—one would have said they were thoughtful-sad, almost plaintive, in their expression. Her other features were finely moulded; but her crowning beauty was her wealth of black hair, purple and glossy as the raven's wing: it was coiled round her beautifully shaped head in massive plaits, and one very large one crossed in the form of a coronet. She was simply dressed, like her little twin-sisters, in a black and white print frock—for they still wore mourning for the loved mother who had died more than a year before; but on the day we write of Pansy had half playfully twisted a dark crimson china-rose with its glossy green leaves into her hair, and stuck another one through the brooch which fastened her white linen collar. As she stood leaning on the gate, with a fair curly-headed sister in each arm, Stanley thought he

had never seen her look so beautiful. As he looked, a sudden idea came into his mind.

"Pansy," he said, "how is it you are so very unlike the rest of your family? Harry, Charlie, and the 'babes in the wood' are all so fair, whilst you are so dark, altogether different; and you are not a bit like your parents either. 'Pon my word, it looks as if old Betty Smith was right, when she says 'it's easy to see the young leddy is none o' that lot; she's the cuckoo in the finch's nest!'"

"Really, Stanley, you're complimentary. What a charming comparison!—do I act the cuckoo's part, think you? push out all the little finches and take possession of the nest myself;" and she fondled the twins as she spoke. Then seeing her brother coming ready for his walk, she once more begged Stanley to thank his aunt for so kindly sending the new-laid eggs for her father, and shook hands heartily with her friend.

"Good-bye, Pansy. Keep up heart, and don't forget the magic spectacles; and take heed to the motto-text, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.'" A farewell wave of his cap, and he and Charlie were off for a day in the woods.

Pansy looked longingly after them for a minute, then ran up the steep path with the laughing little

ones, and went in-doors, where many heavy domestic cares were awaiting her attention; for since Mrs. Stanford's sudden death the year before, the girl had indeed been called to many duties too arduous for her years. Now, as she entered the small sitting-room, she found her cripple brother hard at work painting, and started to see that his work was a likeness of herself. The painting was beautiful, but the young artist's face told of increased suffering from the exertion; and after praising his workmanship, his sister succeeded in getting him to rest on his couch, and let her talk to him for a while till her father should require her.

"Stanley has been here," he said. "I was hard at work, or I would have called him in. When does he return to Cambridge?"

"I don't exactly know, Harry; not for a while, I fancy." Then she told him what he had said about their father, and about getting medical aid.

The boy's eyes filled with tears as he said, "Yes, Pansy, I do wish we could obtain it for him; but the expense of getting a doctor from London is so great, and our means are so small. Oh, if only I could help! But there is no way I can be of use."

"O Harry! indeed you are of great use. You help me so much: and you know you can pray that our

way be made plain;" and she told him about the magic spectacles of which Stanley had spoken.

Harry smiled, and allowed he needed sorely to put them on, for at present he could see nothing but difficulties and perplexities. Still the promise was, if the children of God in "all their ways acknowledge him, he would direct their paths."

Pansy was going on to tell him about the cuckoo in the finch's nest, but she stopped herself, she scarce knew why, and left the room to answer her father's call. But that night, ere she went to rest, she stood longer than was her wont before the looking-glass, and then turned anxiously to a portrait of her father and mother which hung on the wall: she was certainly very unlike both of them. A sudden pang of fear crossed her mind, but she discarded it as foolish; and taking up her Bible, read of Elisha at Dothan, and after prayer fell asleep in the quiet assurance that "the angel of the Lord encamps around them that fear him, and delivereth them."

CHAPTER II.

A VISIT TO THE CHURCHYARD.

"The studio is deserted,
Pallet and brush laid by;
The sketch rests on the easel,
The paint is scarcely dry."


HERE was heart-felt sympathy expressed in the little village of Arnford when, a few weeks after the summer day we have written of, the news spread that the talented, respected artist Mr. Stanford had become totally blind; hopelessly so, it was feared—at least, such had been the opinion given by an experienced oculist brought by Mr. Vernon from London to see the sufferer. Not a word did he tell either the father or daughter till he ushered the oculist into the room, and introduced him as a friend of his own.

Bravely at first Mr. Stanford bore up. When he heard the doctor's opinion, one only hope was held out: bracing air, perfect rest, and nourishing food might so strengthen the constitution that the sight

might in time be partially restored. But the brush must be laid aside. "The will of the Lord be done," said the poor artist; and these words from his lips were no mere form of speech. For years past, in firm reliance on the strength of his Lord and Saviour, Mr. Stanford had striven to do and submit to the will of God; but when alone that night, he owned to himself that this was indeed an overwhelming blow that had fallen on him. How, he asked, was he now to support his children,—feed, clothe, and educate them? He could not accuse himself or his much-loved wife (over whose early death he still bitterly mourned) of extravagance; yet, despite all their care, their savings had been small. He was even yet scarce more than forty years of age, and his landscapes had only of late years begun to draw attention and sell well; but the expense of his increasing family effectually swallowed up the chief part of his yearly income. One thing only appeared evident,—they must sell the pretty cottage where they had lived for ten years, and quit the inland village for some quiet one by the sea-shore. And can we wonder, when he thought on all the difficulties of the moving and the fatigue that, despite the assistance of kind friends, must fall on Pansy, that his heart sunk at the prospect? Very dark, indeed, looked the path

of life just then. But the magic spectacles of faith of which Stanley had spoken had been long worn and tried by the artist, and it was only for a brief moment that he failed to put them on. All the more did he require them, now that the eye of sense was dimmed.

And Pansy—what of her, when her worst fears were confirmed? Truly her heart sunk within her; but she set herself bravely to work, and that not in her own strength, though she had much to learn in the school of God, ere her eyes could clearly see the “guiding pillar.” Self had to be brought down, pride humbled, ere God would be all in all. A very loving, affectionate heart she had; but her besetting sin was self-reliance, and a dread of accepting favours from any one, even from those who loved to help. She would not acknowledge that pride was at the bottom of the feeling, and was vexed when Stanley plainly told her it was so. Harry was her chief comfort and help, and with him she was always meek and lowly, catching more of his spirit than she was aware of.

The cottage ornée was sold; and at last, after many ups and downs, a small, very small one taken in a sea-side village, many, many miles distant from Arnford. It seemed to have no advantage save that of bracing air, and in her own heart Pansy wondered

why it was fixed to go there. True, she, as well as her father and Harry, had prayed to be directed aright; but, like many another, Pansy failed to see that the answer had come when another place than that she had desired was fixed on.

“What shall we do there, Stanley?” she said as they walked down the village street shortly before the day of departure. “We know no one. There is no proper school for Charlie; no means of Harry’s getting further education, now that papa is unfit to teach him. It does seem strange no other house should be found suitable.”

“And for that very reason does it not appear as if this is the one the Lord has provided for you? His guidance was asked, and now you must just wait and see his design in the leading; depend upon it, the guiding pillar has stopped at Weyford.”

“O Stanley, if one were only sure; but how can we?”

“Put on the magic spectacles, Pansy; without them you will never trace the pillar at all. But well you know, if my father, my aunt, and myself had had the choosing of your path, we would have had you stop on in our loved village. O Pansy, it will be hard in holiday times to come here and find you all away; still harder to think of you in poverty and

maybe want. Promise me, Pansy, if you really need, to apply to my father."

The girl shook her head. "We shall do well enough," she said; "but, Stanley, we will never forget the kindness we have received from you all. Only, to think that in five more days we shall have left our old home, and the churchyard where my mother's earthly remains await the resurrection morning. Stanley,"—she gently put her hand on his shoulder,—"when you return here, you will not forget her grave?"

"Nay, Pansy; you may be assured not. I loved her as much as you did. To me she was, indeed, as a loving mother. My own died whilst I was still so young that I remember her only as a dream. But your mother took me into her loving heart, and gave me the warm sympathy and tender counsel which I needed much; and it was her holy life and gentle entreaties and prayers that first of all led me to give my heart to Jesus, and to desire to serve him in the ministry. Yes; in these things I owed Mrs. Stanford more even than I do my own father, good though he is, and dearly as he loves me."

Pansy's eyes were filled with tears as her companion spoke, and as if by mutual consent the two found themselves turning off the street into the lane

which led to the old churchyard. The autumn sun shone out brightly as they entered, and lighted up the late but rich-coloured flowers which decked the graves. The trees overhead were shining in all the gorgeous tints of the declining year. Scarlet, amber, and gold blazed their foliage, which, as yet, had hardly taken on the more sickly tints of decaying life. As the two turned the corner which led to Mrs. Stanford's grave, an involuntary exclamation of surprise broke from their lips; for there, with their little white arms resting on the grassy mound, sat the twin-babies. Their merry faces were quiet then, their blue eyes raised to heaven, whilst their hands were filled with wild flowers, some of which were scattered on the grave. Their backs were turned to Stanley and Pansy, who paused with full hearts to look at the touching sight—life and death so near, and yet so far apart.

In baby language they prattled on, all unconscious of the by-standers.

"Mam-ma isn't here," said little Clara, patting the grave with her white hand. "Mam-ma up in sky; sissy says so."

"Did she fly up?" said Ethel.

Clara looked puzzled. "P'raps Jesus took her; sissy says so. Look, look, Ethy! don't ou see ma up there?"

The elder eyes as well as Ethel's were raised almost involuntarily. A small fleecy cloud just then floated across the blue sky, its form somewhat like that of a woman.

"Oh es; that's mamma in white," said a little voice. "She sees us."

There was certainty in the little voice. The child's faith had grasped the thought that, from yonder sky, the mother whom Jesus had taken to heaven was bending down and looking at them.

"Who knows?" whispered Stanley. "The Lord hides some things from 'the wise and prudent, and reveals them to babes'—'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' But how came the children here alone?"

Quietly, so as not to startle the little ones, Pansy went up to them; but no fear seized the children as they saw her. They were quite proud of their exploit, and, as yet, the thought of disobedience had not come into their minds.

"O sissy, see! we ran away and got these pretty flowers for mam-ma's grave. See how pretty!"

Pansy, annoyed, and somewhat grieved, said,— "But, babies, did you come alone? Where was Charlie? I left you with him. Clara, Ethel, you know you should not have gone out of the garden by yourselves; it was not right, my pets."

Down went the little heads, conscience began to speak, and the blue eyes filled with tears, for even their laughing friend Stanley looked grave; but ere the tears could fall a diversion came, for close by the place where they stood an old woman rose up. She was well known in the village as a half-witted body, and even the little ones feared her, and forgetting their trouble, clung close to Pansy, saying, "Take us avay, sissy; we frightened."

"No need to be afraid of the likes o' me," said the old woman. "It's no Betty Smith's hand would do hurt to the weans o' her that lies there. No, no; it's always the kind word she had for old Betty, and for more than she. The homeless orphan was no left lang at her door unpitied. The Lord reward her;—but there, the old woman was to say never a word o' that," she said. "No more she will, as long as the cuckoo fondles the bit finches. The Lord's blessing go with you two," she said, turning to Stanley and Pansy; "but mind, you young leddy with the black hair and proud eyes (that were none of hers), if e'er the parent birds come after the young nestling they forsook, you'll never leave the younglings o' her that fostered you to want?"

Pansy's eyes flashed, and darting forward, she seized hold of the woman, saying,—

"Speak out, and tell me truly what you mean. Are these little ones not really my own sisters? and was the loved one who lies there in truth not my mother? Oh, speak, and let me know the worst!"

But the old woman's mood was changed; and gazing half terrified at the excited girl, she began to hum some old ditty, and vouchsafed no answer to Pansy's question.

Stanley, meantime, had lifted the frightened babes in his arms, and now entreated Pansy to leave the old woman alone and return home. She turned; but trembling with excitement and vexation, she burst into tears, and, unheeding her companion's entreaties, threw herself on the grave, crying out,—

"Mother, my dear mother, say even from the dead that I am really your child! I will have no mother save you. And oh, mother, hear in heaven my vow,—should I ever find out that old Betty's story is a true one, I promise you, should other parents claim me, I will be true to your little ones, and never leave them, but care for them as tenderly as you cared for me. I vow this by the God you taught me to love, by the Saviour whose name you so early framed my lips to speak. O mother, mother!"—and then a wail of grief rose in the air.

Stanley put down the children and stepped for-

ward, laying his hand on the prostrate girl, and saying authoritatively,—

“Pansy, rise. This is nothing short of sin, to let a half-witted woman’s words thus disturb you; and vows thus made are little worth. Better, far better give your life into the hands of God, and trust him to lead you aright, step by step.”

Stanley’s grave firm tone of voice told on the girl, and, controlling herself, she rose, and taking each of the twins by the hand, as if afraid of any one parting her and them, she walked silently homeward.

At the gate they met Charlie, who had been running in all directions searching for the little ones. When he saw them in his sister’s charge, he was much relieved, though expecting a well-merited scolding for his carelessness. But the words of reproof which greeted him were from Stanley’s, not Pansy’s lips; and though she knew it not, her silence was severer rebuke to the boy than words could have been.

CHAPTER III.

THE PILLAR MOVES.

"We cannot see before us;
But one all-seeing Friend
Is always watching o'er us,
And knows the very end."



"How very late the postman is this morning, father! Surely the mail-coach must have broken down, or been robbed, or"—

"Why, Stanley, my boy," said Mr. Vernon, "what has come over you? Such a list of misfortunes as you have put together, and after all it is only a few minutes past the post hour; and see, here comes Post Willie with the letter-bag strapped on his back safe and sound."

Ere he finished his speech Stanley had disappeared, and soon returned bearing the letters in triumph—four or five to his father, one to his aunt, and one addressed to himself.

"From Pansy," he said, as he broke the seal and

seated himself at the window to read it. It was as follows:—

“DEAR STANLEY,—True to my promise of telling you all that befell us from the time we parted from you at the station, I have taken the first spare moment to do so. We made out the long journey well, the guard to whom you spoke being so kind in assisting papa and Harry when we changed carriages at D——; and the babes behaved beautifully,—partly owing to the bags of goodies you and your father had supplied them with. It certainly, however, was a relief when I saw their little eyes close in sleep. Ah me, how I envied *them*, who could sleep in peace and let others take care of them! Well, I know you will think we older ones need but the child-faith to do likewise,—to act, in fact, as the little bird Luther wrote of did. Harry has, I do believe, learned that secret; and papa,—but I—ah me!

“Well, just as the sun was beginning to set we neared the Welsh hills, which now form the noble background to our little home. Very beautiful they looked, the sunbeams still lingering on their summits;—

‘And as each heathy top they kissed,
It gleamed a purple amethyst.’

But ere we reached home it was almost dark. When

the train stopped, we found a conveyance awaiting us, and a tall thin gentleman helped my father to alight, introducing himself as the rector of Weyford, Mr. Bradsley, your father's old college friend. He was so very kind, I don't know how we could have got on without him; but it was Harry, not I, who, when we wished each other good-night, whispered the words of God's love—'The guiding pillar has gone before us to-day, Pansy, has it not? and directed every step of our journey.' I had not thought of it before; then I remembered how all the difficulties of this dreaded journey had been smoothed away, and here we were safe and sound at the end of it, with the babes already fast asleep, and my father laid quiet for the night.

"The next day was a bright one; and oh, Stanley, we have come to a lovely spot! Right down from our cottage runs a steep road to the rocky beach, where such a stretch of sea lies before one, with the autumn sun quivering on the foam-capped waves, as they are now rolling in and dashing noisily on the high rocks; whilst in the background the noble mountains with their snowy summits are reared grandly up.

"The village is very small, only a few houses scattered here and there; but in the distance one sees

splendid-looking mansions half hidden in a very forest of trees. Their owners, so the postman told Harry to-day, reside in them only for a short time in summer, and most of them have already gone toward. There is no school here where Charlie can possibly go, and no kind friend like you, Stanley, to take him off my hands even for a few hours. Brave Harry says he will teach him all he knows; but that must not be allowed—our clever artist must keep his strength to work at his easel.

"Such a strange thing happened to-day. Mr. Bradsley came in just when Harry had begun to put some finishing touches to the head of the Greek girl he is painting, and for which you know I sat. 'How is your father to-day?' the rector began; then suddenly stopped short, started, and turned deadly pale, as his eyes landed on the face on the easel. 'Where,' he said, 'tell me quickly, did you see the original of that face?' Harry, who at first had been alarmed at Mr. Bradsley's evident confusion, now pointed laughingly to me as I rose from the corner where I was sitting, half hidden by the window curtain. 'Here is the fair original,' he said; 'my sister Pansy.' You should have seen the old man's face of astonishment as he shook hands, apologizing to me, muttering in a dreamy sort of fashion,

‘Strange, very strange ; like, and yet unlike. I beg pardon, young lady ; but that picture and your face recalled a beloved friend to my memory—likenesses are strange things.’ Here he changed the subject, and began to talk of our father and the sad affliction that had befallen him ; but all the while I noticed his eyes rested on me, as if he were puzzling himself who it was I reminded him of, probably some friend of his young days whom he had loved and lost. He on his part puzzles me, he looks so much older than he can be ; for I remember dear Mr. Vernon spoke of him as some years younger than himself : perhaps some untold grief has aged him prematurely. He is certainly very kind, and already my father has taken to him ; and oh, Stanley, only think, he has asked that Charlie may come to him for a few hours every morning to study, saying it will be an untold boon to him to teach an intelligent boy. And Charlie is so pleased, and papa seems relieved of a heavy burden by the very proposal ; so here again comes a rebuke to my unbelief. Well may it be said to me, ‘O you of little faith, wherefore do you doubt ?’ Now, dear Stanley, I must stop. Kind, best love to dear Mr. Vernon and your aunt, and always believe me to be your affectionate friend,

“SELINA STANFORD.”

Stanley handed the letter, after he had read it, to his father; then remained silent a while, apparently lost in thought. At last he broke the silence somewhat abruptly,—

“ You are quite sure, father,” he said, “ that Selina is really Mr. Stanford’s daughter ? ”

Mr. Vernon looked at his son with an expression of bewilderment. “ What do you mean, Stanley ? Mr. Stanford’s daughter ? —of course she is, and his eldest child as well. She was four years old, I think, and Harry nearly or quite three, when they came here first. The father was a struggling young artist, who certainly had enough to do to keep his wife and children in house and food, without adding other people’s children, I should say. I know some of the people here about got up some story of the kind, through poor half-witted Betty Smith, who thought she saw some resemblance in the child to some one she had known and loved ; but surely, Stanley, you know better than to believe any such fool-like story.”

“ Of course I do, sir ; but at times one cannot help wondering that she is so unlike the others, and her father and mother as well, both in face and character —I think quite as much so as to justify Betty’s comparison of the cuckoo and the chaffinch. Poor

girl," he added with a sigh, "she has too many burdens laid on her, for one so young; and as yet she has not, I fear, learned fully to trust the great Burden-bearer."

These last words were partly said to himself; and then he rose to make preparations for his return to Cambridge, which was to take place the next day. As he did so, the question rose often to his mind, "When and under what circumstances would he next meet his old companion, Pansy?"

CHAPTER IV.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"Why are ye troubled? wherefore thus
Discouraged on the way?
The Traveller to Emmaus yet
Journeys with you to-day."



T was winter; icicles hung from the roof, snow lay deep on the ground, and "Johnnie Frost" was reigning in all his terrors. The cold was severe enough, even in houses where the atmosphere was tempered by heated air in the lobbies and rousing fires in the rooms; but in those where no such comforts were available, where stern poverty forbade the luxury, if such it could be called, of even a good fire, the cold was almost unbearable. "Yes, unbearable," said Pansy Stanford, as she stood in her own little room dressing one December morning, and trying by rubbing her hands together to restore their benumbed circulation.

There was a fire in Mr. Stanford's room, and in the

small parlour where Harry painted and the twins played, and a small one too in the kitchen; but Pansy had no time to waste warming herself at any of these. And this morning, as she dressed, a heavy burden was weighing her down, for she felt that one even of these few fires must be given up; coals were so dear, and the house funds were now almost finished, and whence were they to be replenished?

Harry was suffering so from the cold that he had ceased for some days to work at his easel. Mr. Stanford was entirely at present confined to his own room, bearing his sore trial with wondrous resignation, though feeling, as only a loving father can, the bitterness of knowing that his children were in want, and he, their bread-winner, unable to help them. Ah, these are the circumstances when a man's faith and trust in God need to be strong indeed truly to bow the head and say, "Thy will be done."

And yet Mr. Stanford did not know how bad things really were. His fire was always kept good, the small quantity of food he ate was always of the best, and Pansy and Harry spoke bravely and hopefully before him; and only the morning before the one we write of, the twin-girls had prattled to him with childish delight about the nice warm winter dresses sissy was making for them—tartan ones, they said,

never adding (perhaps not knowing) that they were made out of Pansy's only really warm dress, though it was a year-old one. And amid all his troubles Mr. Stanford had one great pleasure left to him. Amongst Mr. Vernon and Stanley's many kindnesses none was more gratefully appreciated than the present of a small piano, suited to the size of the cottage room, given by her two friends to Pansy as a remembrance; along with it was also a guitar from Miss Vernon.

Pansy had a good cry of joy when, a few weeks after their arrival at Weyford, these well-timed gifts had arrived. Her delight was great, not only on her own account, but on her father's, who had a passionate love of music, and whose greatest delight had been to listen to Pansy's playing and singing; for her musical talent was of no ordinary kind, and from her childhood she had been carefully taught,—and up to the time of her mother's death, when they went to London for some weeks yearly Mr. Stanford had given Pansy music and singing lessons from the best masters.

Charlie, too, thanks to Mr. Bradsley's kindness, was getting on well with his lessons; so, though Mr. Stanford felt painfully his own helplessness, and at times looked anxiously forward to the future, of the present real difficulties he was as yet ignorant.

When Pansy was dressed and seated beside Harry after breakfast in the little parlour, for the few minutes' quiet talk which the brother and sister always contrived to have ere the work of the day began, she confessed to him most unwillingly the state of the funds: ready money there was none, and their father never allowed them to run accounts—indeed, the doing so would not have mended matters. The dinner for that day was in the house, and was sufficient; but to-morrow was Christmas, and she had not a penny to buy food with. Next week Harry was to receive a small sum for a portrait he had taken of a farmer's son who had just started for Australia; he might apply for the payment now, but shrank from so doing, if possible. The servant-girl who had followed them from their old home, and who had been trained by their mother, had been promised her month's wages on Christmas-day; but small as they were, the money was not ready to pay them. And as she told all, Pansy laid down her head and sobbed aloud.

"O Harry! Harry! it is all dark; I can't see a step before us! And it looks as if God even had forgotten us, and forsaken us."

"‘I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ He has said so, Pansy,” whispered her brother. “It is

very dark to us just now, sister dear ; but I think there is light behind the cloud, and somehow I fancy I see a ray of sunshine, though it does look very small. But we must trust God still, dear ; he has never left us yet, has he ? You remember how once before money had failed, and all looked so dark, only my brave little sister did not give way so much, for the days were warmer and the poor body was not so physically depressed as it is in this bitter cold ; and how, when things were at the worst, our Father in heaven put it into Mr. Bradsley's heart to wish to possess the picture of the Greek girl I had painted, and which he said reminded him of some one he had known long ago, and how he paid me a good sum for it—far more than I had expected ; and then, you know, the darkness fled, and we got father that nice warm dressing-gown he wears now, and other little comforts. Look up, Pansy ; God lives, and remember he spared not his only Son for us. Besides, dear, we have enough, you say, for to-day, and he tells us not to live in anxious suspense ; to-morrow is his. You know the lines Stanley used so often to quote to us?—

‘I have nothing to do with to-morrow ;
Its burden then why should I bear ?
Its grace and its strength I can’t borrow,
So why should I borrow its care ?’”

“I know,” sobbed Pansy ; “but oh, Harry, I can’t

help looking forward. And the children need new frocks ; they have no warm jackets for out-of-door wear. And Charlie, too, he does wear out his clothes so ; and you, Harry, why, your coat's all patched—”

But her mouth was stopped by her brother's kiss. “Never mind me, Pansy ; my things are good enough, and I am better to-day, the pain is nearly gone. And see ! I have got some sheets of coloured paper Mr. Bradsley gave Charlie the other day, and I mean to make some beautiful figures out of it for a Christmas tree for the children ; and you'll see, Pansy, though we have no fine presents to put on it, and very few lights, if we have not as merry a time as some of those who have finer ones.”

“A Christmas tree ! O Harry ! and I don't believe we'll have a Christmas dinner !”

“I think we will, Pansy ; I believe ‘the Lord will provide ;’ but if not, I know there is bread in the house for two days, and ‘Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of good cheer with strife.’ Thank God, we have love in our house, and not strife. ‘Tis not, dear, as if we had brought ourselves to the strait we are in. God sent the trial, and he it is who has placed us in our present circumstances. He knows we are trying our best to use the talents he has given us—not sitting down listlessly,

and saying, ‘The Lord will provide;’ and so I do believe, if we trust in him, he will not leave us without help. Put on your magic spectacles, Pansy, and look up. It has been written, ‘Looking forward strains the eye, looking upward opens heaven.’ And there’s our father knocking for you, darling; and you’ll see if we don’t have both a Christmas dinner and a tree as well!’

Pansy sprung up almost smiling, and kissed her brother, saying,—

“I sometimes think you must have wings hid away under your coat, Harry; for I am sure you are an angel in disguise, and draw down blessings on us all.”

Had she lingered a moment longer, she would have seen the shade of deep sorrow that crossed her brother’s face when he lay alone,—of *sorrow*, not of *distrust*, but of grief for the sister he loved so dearly having so much to do and bear, whilst she was yet so young; but a moment after, if she had heard the childlike prayer, in which he made known all his troubles and told all his desires to the elder Brother whom he loved so well, to the heavenly Father he trusted so fully, she would have known even better than she did the source whence he did indeed draw down blessings on the house.

“Sissy! sissy! tum and have a nice run—tum out ‘mongst the snow! See! see what a great big ball I made!—look!” and Pansy, as she came out at the cottage door dressed for a walk, was greeted by a very harmless couple of snowballs thrown at her by the twins, who were in great glee at the to them first sight of snow. Happy babes! Little wot they of poverty and its attendant ills. The snow-covered earth, and the pendent icicles glittering and half melting under the noon tide sun, were to them a very fairyland of beauty and delight; and, to add to all, they were to walk down to the village with Pansy.

Off they set, half walking, half running, dragging their sister along with them, and making-believe to snowball her, till she too joined in the laugh, and became as merry as the little ones.

A pleasant walk they had, and, all ruddy with the exercise, they were climbing the steep road which led homeward, when a boy, wheeling a small hamper on a barrow, overtook them.

“Please, miss,” he said, addressing Pansy, “can ye tell me where the house that Mr. Stanford lives in is? The missus she forgot the name, and, says she, any one will tell you where the young gentleman what paints pictures lives.”

Ere Pansy could answer, a couple of little voices

chimed in,—“Oh ! that’s Harry—our brother Harry He lives, and we live, up here. See, in that place.”

The boy grinned at the little speakers, but saying, “All right, thank you,” wheeled off with his parcel.

Pansy hastened after him, eager to know who was sending Harry a hamper, and wondering what its contents would be. Ere she reached the door, Charlie was carrying the hamper off eagerly to Harry, saying,—

“See, here’s a Christmas present to you ; and only think, it is from Mrs. Williams, the mother of the lad whose portrait you drew.”

The hamper proved a most welcome one : a large turkey for the Christmas dinner, and a piece of home-cured bacon, along with a large cheese, and a dozen of new-laid eggs for the invalid gentleman. The good woman begged that young Mr. Stanford would accept these things as a small mark of gratitude for the beautiful picture he had made of her now absent son ; adding, that her husband enclosed one half of the payment for the painting, the other half to be sent next month.

As the hamper was unpacked, Harry’s eyes sought Pansy’s with a look so full of trust, gratitude, and joy that she never forgot it. But as he put the money for Susan’s wages into her hand, and then smilingly

told her to see what a fine Christmas dinner Mrs. Williams had sent them, he added also,—

“The God of Elisha still lives, Pansy. I was sure it would come.”

But more than one box was destined to arrive at the cottage that Christmas eve. Later in the afternoon, when the shades of evening were beginning to lower, and the snow was falling in little feathery flakes, and Mr. Stanford was seated in the arm-chair by the fire, a clapping of hands was heard from the little ones, as they stood at the window watching the snow-flakes drifting down.

“Papa, papa!—sissy!—see a cart stopping here!”

In a moment Charlie was at the window.

“Oh! 'tis the carrier's cart, papa, and the man is bringing up a box here. Well, I declare if that is not jolly; another hamper for Harry, I believe.”

But Charlie was wrong. The hamper this time was for Pansy.

“It must be from the Vernons,” she said; “who, except them, would think of me? and I know that is Stanley's writing.”

What a hamper that was, to be sure! Not one member of the family forgotten; and valuable as many of the presents were, still the thoughtful love that made each gift so appropriate doubled the value.

A warm eider-down quilt for Mr. Stanford; a quilted dressing-gown for Harry; a chinchilla muff, collarette, and cuffs for Pansy (Stanley's Christmas gift to her), along with a beautifully bound copy of Cowper's poems; a couple of ready-made soft merino pelisses, trimmed with fur, for the "babes in the wood," a famous Inverness cape for Charlie, and a knife and pocket-book as well; and a warm shawl from Miss Vernon to her old Sunday scholar, Susan. These were some of the gifts that brought warm tears of heartfelt gratitude to the eyes of more than one of the party. A small box contained all sorts of pretty little knick-knacks and presents for a Christmas tree, and some bright-coloured tapers as well. So, when Christmas evening came, there were few prettier trees to be seen than the one lit in the Stanfords' parlour; and despite poverty, sickness, and trial, there were few happier households in all Great Britain than the one in the quiet sea-side village.

Mr. Bradsley and a little nephew joined the party, and some of the poor children in the village with whom Pansy had made acquaintance came to see the sight. There were merry laughter and happy faces around the fireside; and when, ere the close of the evening, Mr. Bradsley read aloud about the scene of many hundred years before on the plains of Bethlehem,

and of the song sung by the angelic choir, of peace on earth and good will to men, all hearts seemed to join in the strain, and, like the shepherds', were stirred up to glorify and praise the Lord. The little ones sung the pretty Christmas carol :—

“ There came a little child to earth
Long ago,
And the angels of God proclaimed his birth
High and low :
Out on the night so calm and still
Their song was heard ;
For they knew that the child on Bethlehem’s hill
Was Christ the Lord.”

And Harry, as he bade Pansy good-night, whispered the words, “ Because thou hast been our help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings will we put our trust.”

And Pansy understood, and said, “ Lord, increase my faith.”

CHAPTER V.

THE VICARAGE.

"No time is wasted, and no labour lost,
That teaches our proud hearts, at any cost,
From self escaping, to escape to Thee,
And learn the wisdom of simplicity."



M R. BRADSLEY'S study was a dark room, especially on a winter day. But one morning some weeks after the Christmas day we have written of, he was roused from his writing by the door being quietly opened, and a flood of light, as it seemed to him, suddenly entered along with a visitor—an unusual one, truly, in that study, for it was Pansy Stanford. Very beautiful she looked in her simple winter dress. She carried a small basket on her arm; and in her hand she had a bunch of pure white snowdrops—large, full, and spotless, as only real country-grown snowdrops are.

"Mr. Bradsley," she said, as she noticed his look of pleased surprise at her entrance, "I hardly know ho-

to apologize for my intrusion. But I heard that you were starting to-morrow for London ; and you have been so kind to us all that I thought I might ask your advice on a subject—”

But here Pansy fairly broke down, as if words or courage failed her. Yet she strove bravely not to let the tears that filled her eyes fall, and refused the seat in which the good vicar, in his distress at her emotion, begged her to be seated.

“ No, thanks,” she said ; “ I would rather stand. Mr. Bradsley, I know it is wrong and foolish to feel like this. It is only, we are poor—very poor ; and I wish to make a little money to help the others, as Harry does. Poor Harry—he works so hard ! He is our only bread-winner now, and we are almost entirely dependent on his earnings ; and I am young and strong, and ought to help more. And please tell me how I can.”

“ Help more ! Why, Miss Pansy, I have often wondered how you had strength to do all you do. And Mr. Stanford has more than once said to me, one of his greatest trials was the seeing you and Harry have to work as you do, whilst he could only sit helpless. My dear young friend, think of your household cares alone—your constant charge of your baby-sisters, your loving attention to your invalid father and

brothers—and surely you are wrong in saying you do not work as hard as Harry!"

"Oh, but, Mr. Bradsley, these things are of small account" (and here a flush suffused her face); "they don't bring in money, and there are so many things to be bought."

Mr. Bradsley's hand was almost involuntarily raised to seek his purse. But he stopped: a haughty look crossed Pansy's brow, as if she saw the motion and understood it.

"Nay," she said (and her tone of voice was hard and proud); "I am no beggar. But I want to know where I can get work to do. I could teach music; or I could work with my needle. See here! Mamma said I had a turn for designing patterns, and skill in embroidering them; and she taught me. And I thought if only I knew of any shop in London where they would care for such things as these, they might have brought in a little money." And opening her basket, she took out a piece of rich white satin for a music-stool cover, with a wreath of beautiful flowers embroidered with rare skill in richly-coloured silks.

Mr. Bradsley was no connoisseur in lady's work; but it needed little to tell that it was no ordinary piece of work that the girl had in her hand. The

rosebuds and fern-leaves were perfect in form and shading.

"How lovely!" he said. "Is this your own designing, Miss Stanford?"

"Yes," she replied, pleased at his look of approval; "and I thought it might sell."

The proud look had passed now, and was replaced by the anxious one that of late had become too common on that young face.

The vicar looked at her keenly and sorrowfully. A strange, far-off expression came into his eyes as he gazed, as if he was looking through yet beyond her into by-gone years. He was silent for a moment, sitting with his head bent, and his hand covering his eyes. Then he said abruptly, but kindly,—

"Miss Pansy, I wish I knew how to help you in this matter. You are a brave girl; but bear with me if I warn you that you will add to the trials the Lord has laid on you in your youth, if you cherish a proud spirit. 'The Lord resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.' It is the meek he shall 'beautify with salvation.' Listen to me, dear friend. I knew one, of whom you remind me in a most remarkable way, bring a life-long sorrow on herself and others by the want of a spirit bowed in meek submission to the will of God, about this very

subject of accepting help; and I would fain spare you a like sorrow. Listen to my proposal now. Accept from me, as your pastor and friend, a little help in the meantime, and I will see what I can do for you about the sale of your work in London. And, Miss Pansy, I do wish you would allow the one or two families I have mentioned before to call for you, and not suffer pride to make you shut yourself up from those who would gladly befriend you."

The girl was much agitated. She felt the vicar's kindness deeply; but not yet had she learned to humble herself in God's hands. There was a conflict in her heart; but the cry to the "Stronger than the strong one" was not uttered, and victory on the right side was not yet obtained.

"You are kind, very kind, Mr. Bradsley," she said; "but indeed I cannot accept help whilst I can work, and Harry. And as for friends, I have no time, nor indeed wish, to make more acquaintances; and I cannot visit in houses, even if I could leave home, when we have no means of returning their hospitality. Indeed, sir, you must not press me; though I do feel so grateful to you for your offer. But I must decline it. We shall do better, I daresay, by-and-by." And she began to fold up the piece of work which she still held in her hand.

Mr. Bradsley looked very grave, but said, "Stop a minute, Miss Stanford. A thought has just occurred to me. I should like to let my housekeeper, Mrs. Edmunds, see that embroidery." And rising, he rung the bell.

It was answered by a tall, elderly woman with a pleasant, intelligent face and a kindly manner.

"Come here, Mary," said the vicar, "and tell me what you think of this for a young lady's workmanship."

She took the work from Pansy's hand, after wishing her a good morning.

"Well, that be's as beautiful a piece of embroidery as ever I see'd," she said. "Dear heart, it minds me, for all the world, of the pieces of work the old lady—your good mother, sir—used to do, and that she taught to more than one young leddy. Well, now, if only my sister that's begun the fine shop in London could see this, she would give no end of money to have it. It's all the fashion like now, that old embroidery work. She wrote me only last week. Well, I do declare you are a clever young leddy to do that."

"I am glad you like it, Mary. Now, do you think that is the sort of thing your sister would care for? I just remembered that you had told me she had opened a fancy-work shop in London; and I thought—"

Here he paused, afraid that Pansy might not wish it known she desired her work to be sold. But Pansy's pride lay not in that direction, and she finished his sentence, eagerly saying,—

"Oh, Mrs. Edmunds, I am so desirous of disposing of that piece of work, and a few others I have like it! Do you think your sister would buy them, and if she would allow me to work for her? I have just made some really pretty designs for those embroidered aprons that, you know, are so much in vogue now."

"Well now, my dear, it is curious your having these things, and wishing to sell them. For my sister she wrote to me if only I could ask any of my friends hereabouts if they could do that kind of work; for if so, says she, I'll keep them in work, and pay them well too. Why, deary me, sir, it's just as if there were a providence in the matter; though, to be sure, it do look a little thing for He to take heed about. Only, you see, my sister she was so set on it, and trusted to me to help her about it. She's most liker my child than my sister, you know, sir. She's such a many years younger than me, that I did think there was no harm in telling the Lord about it. So I just put the letter before him, like Hezekiah did with his; and I asked him if he would help me in this matter. For I had such a wish to help Fanny—little

Fanny, I always call her—and now here comes the answer. You don't think I was wrong or irreverent-like, sir, in doing it?"

"No, Mary; surely no. You and I have long ere now proved the Lord's loving-kindness in small things as well as great; and learned that when it is said, 'Let *all* your requests be made known to God,' it does not mean only not the little ones, which, after all, are oftener great to us. I do believe this matter has been ordered by the Lord. And, Miss Pansy, I will take the work, if you will allow me, to London with me to-morrow, and see what I can do for you. Harry, I know, will see the hand of God in this matter, if you have told him."

"Oh no, Mr. Bradsley, I have not. I would rather he did not know—yet, at all events. But"—and she lowered her voice as she spoke—"I *did* ask Jesus to help me in this matter. I do love him, sir, though I am so unlike him."

The vicar's face brightened. "I thought it," he said. "I am so glad, my child. He will not leave his own work unfinished, nor allow a known sin to get dominion over a child of his own. Only see to it you yield to his teaching, and not make his chastening be of necessity a hard one. God bless you, and keep you."

Pansy rose to go; presenting, as she did so, her bunch of snowdrops to her friend.

"Let me put these in this glass, Mr. Bradsley," she said; "they will brighten up your study. Papa did so love a flower in his,—when he could see," she added, with a sigh. "There, now! don't they look pure and pretty?"

"Indeed they do; many thanks for them. I am not too proud, you see, to accept a small gift from a friend."

He said this with a smile, as he parted with her at the door; but a graver look came over his face as he watched her as she tripped down the garden walk.

"Poor child!" he said to himself; "she has much to learn. Pride and poverty do ill together. But her Father in heaven is an all-wise one; and it is the chastening of a child, not of an enemy, that she will receive to bring her to his feet. Ay, it is a hand of love, a pierced hand, that will smite."

He moved to go back to the study. As he did so, a hand touched his arm. He turned.

"Yes, Mary?"

She looked at him wistfully. "She's strangely like," she said.

He understood her at once. "Ay, Mary," he said;

"very like. And yet there is a difference. And the name too—Selina!"

"Is it so, sir?"

"Yes; I thought I had told you. No? Well, it is a curious circumstance."

"You are sure, sir?"

"Of what?"

"That she is no relation."

"Quite sure. I am glad you saw the likeness; for, if not, I might have come to think it was an old man's fancy."

"Old! Indeed, sir? And you not passing fifty years."

"Ah, well; life does not always count by the years one has lived, Mary. And I seem to have lived long, and been an unprofitable servant to a patient, loving Master."

"But I do wish I knew for certain if our Selina still lives."

"I believe not. I suppose there was positive proof of the loss of the vessel they sailed in, though so little has been heard. Ah me! God forgive those who drove her from her own land. But, at least, she had her husband with her."

"I've heard that doubted, sir. She said he was to follow, and meet her. She went with friends."

There was a pause in the conversation. Mr. Brad-sley's eyes wandered over the lovely landscape that spread out before him, sparkling now under the clear spring sunshine. The sea looked grand just then—not too peaceful, and yet in no stormy mood. His thoughts turned to it, and to one who had found therein a watery grave. Again his reverie was broken.

"There was a great notion, sir, there was a child. What if this Selina were she?"

"How could that be? If there was a child, would father and mother leave it behind? They had no need to be ashamed of it. And I tell you, Selina Stanford's mother's maiden name was Ethel Elwin. No, no, Mary! It is best for you and me to put these thoughts out of our mind, and to look forward to meeting the one we loved where all sins will be washed away in the blood of the Lamb. For, with all her faults, she loved Him, Mary; and, I doubt not, sought and found forgiveness through Him. But this girl—we must befriend her, if we can. I fear me, it will not be very long ere she and her brothers and sisters be left orphans.—But see, here comes my little pupil, Charlie. So now to work." And Mr. Bradsley, after kindly welcoming the boy, turned with him into the study, and began a Greek lesson.

In the meantime Pansy was sitting in her own room, with a strangely mixed feeling in her heart. The “magic spectacles” were showing her very plainly God’s loving hand in the incident we have just related ; and in her heart she thanked him. But his voice within her was as plainly—if only she would have listened—whispering to her of secret rebellion against the yoke he had laid on her ; telling her that what she tried to call a spirit of independence was not so, but a spirit of pride and self-confidence, unbecoming a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus.

Well, let those amongst us who are without sin cast the first stone at her, if they dare ; but there is an Eye all-seeing, all-powerful, and all-loving, who even then was bent over her, saying, “Go, and sin no more.”

CHAPTER VI.

STANLEY'S VISIT.

"God's leadings often crossed their inclination—
The pillar went too fast, or went too slow;
It stayed too long to suit their restless temper,
Or, when they wished to stay, it bade them go."



SUMMER, rosy summer, had burst upon the earth: sunbeams were glancing everywhere; peeping through woodland thickets, and making strange tracery there of light and shadow ; glistering, too, on the waves as they broke with a dash on the rocky beach at Weyford ; dazzling the eyes as they marked what has been so expressively called

"The sparkling glee, where waves and sunshine meet."

With shouts of delight the little twin-girls, Ethel and Clara Stanford, were noting it, as they played on the beach, and clapped their hands as each merry wavelet swept round the smaller rocks, and tossed up some of the tangled sea-weeds borne from afar.

Pansy, too, shared the children's glee, as she stood enjoying the freshening breeze which, even on that hot July day, blew from the sea.

Presently the little ones, weary of watching the waves, began to dig in the sand, building up, in child-fashion, high castles, which, like those older children build in the air, were doomed to speedy destruction. And Pansy, seeing them too deeply interested in their play to be afraid of their leaving the beach, strolled quietly down by the water's edge till she reached a favourite sheltered nook in the rocks, and seated herself for a short rest. As she sat she mused (a somewhat unusual employment in her busy life); and as she did so thoughts of the quiet inland village where her young life had been spent, and of dearly loved ones there, filled her mind.

She was learning to love her new home, and the path of life which had been so rough when we saw her last in the vicar's study had been smoother of late. Mr. Stanford, if not stronger, was certainly not losing ground, and in these warm summer days loved to sit out in the little garden and bask in the sunshine, which, alas! he could no longer see. Harry, too, seemed to have gained strength from the sea breeze, and had found for the present full employment for his brush; whilst Pansy herself employed

her spare time in the beautiful embroidery, for which she received remunerative payment. So just then the cloud of daily trial had been lifted off the girl's spirit, the anxious look had left the face ; and as she sat, amongst other thoughts there mingled thankful ones of God's loving-kindness and undeserved mercies.

A touch on her shoulder made her turn round, and at the same moment start to her feet. A man's figure bent over her.

"Stanley ! oh, is it possible ! Why, this is too good news to be true. Is there anything wrong that you are here ?"

The young man smiled. "The same Pansy as of old," he said ; "looking out for evil tidings, afraid to believe in good ones, eh ? Nay, Pansy, I left my father almost well, and took the first opportunity of paying my longed-for visit to my old friends. I have already had a chat with Mr. Stanford and Harry, and then set off in search of you and the little ones. This is a glorious scene, Pansy," he said, as his eye scanned the wide expanse of sea before them ; then reverently raising his hat as he spoke, he slowly repeated the words of the Psalmist : "The sea is his, and he made it ; and his hands formed the dry land. The Lord is good to all ; and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Pansy's eye filled as he spoke, and taking his arm in her old childish way, she jumped down the rocks, and led him along the beach. Led him, she said, but somehow there was the old feeling that when Stanley was near she was the led one; and to the girl who all these long months had had to think and act for others, there was a wonderful rest and confidence in leaning on the strong manly arm that almost bore her along as they walked.

"Ah," he said, "there are my old friends the 'babes in the wood.' Stop, Pansy; let's see if they will remember me."

"Of course they will, Stanley. How can you doubt it?"

But ten months, at the early age of two years, is apt to obliterate even the dearest friend from a child's memory; and it was as a stranger that the twins, at Pansy's bidding, greeted Stanley, though by degrees some faint remembrance of the past came to them at the sound of his voice. Still it was as the kind friend who had sent them goodies and toys for the Christmas tree that they thought of the stranger.

Stanley was amused at Pansy's dismay that they should have so soon forgotten the one who had so constantly filled her thoughts during those months.

The walk home was a quiet one. Stanley was

silently marking the change which time had made on his old companion. There were hard lines on that beautiful face for which he could scarce account; for Pansy had never confided to him the sore straits through which they had passed. But at times he traced a look of peace and trust which she lacked of old.

All through the pleasant days which they spent together he noted many little things which showed him that she, like Harry, was indeed following hard after God; not, as yet, like one of whom it has been said, He followed the Lord wholly. But still he felt her path was tending upwards. On the stepping-stones of her old self she was rising heavenward, although there was much yet to be crushed under foot.

They had been having a pleasant ramble together one day, accompanied by Charlie, when, on the way up a steep hillside pathway, they met a lady, who gave a friendly bow, and seemed disposed to stop and speak; but Pansy passed on, returning the bow in a distant, even haughty way.

"What now?" said Stanley; "in what manner has the fair Quakeress" (for such she was) "offended your high and mighty majesty?"

Pansy coloured. "Don't speak nonsense, Stanley."

she has not offended me at all. But the fact is, I don't care to make acquaintance with people in the village—these kind of people, I mean, who ask you to their houses, and load you with hospitality which you are too poor to return, and—”

Stanley, though in a grave tone, finished the sentence—“too proud to receive, eh ?”

She dropped his arm. The old subject was about to be renewed.

“Dear Pansy,” he continued, “ask your own heart, is it right thus to isolate yourself from your fellow-creatures, and, under the lofty-sounding name of independence, to foster a spirit of pride which in God's sight is no small sin ? You know how it is said, ‘In the great day, when the Lord alone shall be exalted, the lofty looks of many shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down.’”

“O Stanley, indeed I am not proud ; only I must keep up a right spirit of not accepting kindnesses which I cannot return.”

“Such as—?” he asked interrogatively.

“Going to dinner, and taking the twins with me to places, when I could not invite the askers back in return.”

Stanley fairly laughed, but checked himself. “Why, Pansy,” he said, “have you never tasted the

joy of ‘doing kindnesses’ without seeking a reward, that you refuse to let others taste the pleasure of doing so to you? Surely you have forgotten who it is who hath said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ But if all were too proud to accept a gift, the joy of giving would require to be given up. It is a mean, low view of kindness, altogether unworthy of you, Pansy, to think of it only in the light of expected return. I believe your Quakeress friend finds her pleasure in bestowing kindnesses, and as she has ‘freely received,’ likes freely to give. I don’t speak of her altogether in ignorance, for Mr. Bradsley told me yesterday she is a blessing to the neighbourhood and to all who know her.”

Pansy coloured at the speech, but said nothing; for she knew well this was one of the things in which Mr. Bradsley too thought her wrong, and had more than once met the very objections she had been urging to Stanley by the quiet yet firm remark, “An altogether false view of independence, Miss Pansy. We are all dependent on each other, let us say what we will. And of believers especially it is written, ‘If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.’” So now it was no small relief to the girl to have the conversation changed by Charlie running up to them with a bunch of wild flowers in his hand, the

botanical names of which he wished Stanley to tell him.

When his curiosity was satisfied, he turned to his sister. "See here, Pansy; I got this on purpose for you." And he displayed a graceful spray of the pale pink dog-rose with its green leaves.

"Oh, how lovely!" she said. "Thanks, Charlie. I see you have an eye for the beautiful; and this will make such an exquisite copy for the piece of embroidery I have just got a commission to do. By the way, Stanley," she said, "Mr. Bradsley did me a real kindness in getting me constant employment for that sort of work. It has been a great help to me in many ways indeed. Mr. Bradsley is so kind to us all, and such a comfort to papa and Harry. They always are so much brighter after his visits. I think he has the knack of cheering people up; and yet he often looks so sad—never more so than when he looks at me; he says I remind him of one he loved. I wonder who it was! Did you ever hear of any special love-story in his life, Stanley? for Susan says the villagers speak of something of the kind."

"There was a very true love-story, though not of the kind Susan means or the villagers gossip about. But Mr. Bradsley loved very dearly his young impulsive half-sister, whom he brought up from her

childhood, and treated with almost a father's care ; but she disappointed him—through pride, my father says—then married into a family of higher station than her own, who refused to have anything to do with either herself or her husband, and by so doing compelled them to seek a livelihood in another country. About a year after they were married they set sail for America, and the vessel in which they sailed was wrecked, leaving only a few survivors (who were rescued by a ship in passing) to tell the tale. Mr. Bradsley never heard full particulars, but he was certain his sister, at all events, was amongst the lost. A report afterwards reached him that her husband had not sailed in the same vessel with her being detained by special business, but was to follow after. Whether this was true or not, no one knows ; but I am sure it is to his sister Mr. Bradsley sees a likeness in your face. He has a most loving, affectionate heart, and I am truly glad, in prospect of my long absence, to think you have such a friend near you."

Pansy started, and the rose spray she held in her hand fell to the ground. "Your long absence, Stanley! —what do you mean ? Surely you are not going to leave England ?"

He drew her arm once more tenderly in his own, as he replied, "Yes, Pansy ; I have been summoning

up courage for days to tell you this. Harry knows already. The pillar-cloud has moved, and I must follow God's leading. Ah, me! I fear, like the Israelites of old, not willingly, though, I hope, in faith and trust. I have been appointed travelling tutor to young Lord D——, and we set off, God willing, next month, and may not return for at least three years. I have not sought this, Pansy, nor even desired it. Many sweet ties bind my heart to home; but it seems best to go. My father wishes it. The appointment is a good one, as regards money. Lord D—— is a clever, well-disposed, gentlemanly youth, to whom, by God's grace, I may be of use; and travelling will give me many opportunities of mental improvement which I could not obtain at home; and so I dare not say no, even though the leading of the pillar has crossed my inclination. In three years, Pansy, if God will, I will be home and ready to enter the Church, and begin the desire of my heart—to work for my Saviour in some of the dark places of our home field. Are you really so sorry that I should go?"

"Sorry!—O Stanley, I can't bear to think of it. Why, all my life it seems as if I had clung to you and needed you; and now, with papa so ill, and dear Harry so helpless, how will I get on without you?" and the girl burst into tears.

Stanley's eyes filled, but he spoke bravely: "Why, Pansy, just think how well you have got on this last year without me. And even were I to remain in this country, it is not likely we would see much of each other; nor could I be much of a help to either Mr. Stanford or Harry, though you know how gladly I would be so. I grieve more, far more than you can guess, at leaving you all; but, Pansy, it is right I should do so, and you are too brave a girl to make the parting worse than it is. Three years will soon pass." He paused. Words were on his lips, but he felt they were better unsaid. Then he asked abruptly, "Pansy, how old are you?"

"Sixteen," she said.

"Well, only think—in three years you will be a woman!"

"I am that now," she answered sorrowfully.

And as her companion glanced at her and saw the traces of care and anxiety on her beautiful face, he owned to himself it was even so—she was a woman before her time: a child of God, he thought with joy, though with a spirit of pride it would require no small tribulation to humble; but once truly broken, there would be, he knew, loving arms to raise her up and enfold her.

That night Stanley Vernon held a long conversa-

tion alone with Mr. Stanford ; and when he re-entered the little parlour where Harry, Pansy, Charlie, and the twins were assembled, it was with a strangely agitated countenance. Of two things he was now certain : the one was, that Mr. Stanford's blindness was from failing health, which could end only in death, and that at no distant date; the other, confided to him by Mr. Stanford himself, was the fact that Pansy was no child of the Stanfords, but a little foundling of unknown parentage, laid at the door of the kind-hearted artist and his gentle wife when only six months old. All inquiries regarding her had been made, but in vain. Her dress and a sum of money, £40, pinned inside a rich white cloak, told the tale that she was no pauper child, but nothing more was known of her. The name Selina and a curious old bracelet and antique ring were all the marks they had to go on ; and after every endeavour had been made to discover her relations, and no trace could be found, the young couple took the little deserted child to their home and hearts, and reared her with their own little ones, with the same love and care.

Mr. Stanford, knowing the girl's besetting sin, a proud spirit, had purposely concealed from her all knowledge of the fact, fearing, with too good cause, that she would chafe under the feeling of being in

any degree a burden to those who had no claim to help her. But when Stanley told him of his intended departure, he felt compelled to confide to him the whole story, so that if, as he felt sure would be the case, he should die ere his return, some one might know the full particulars, lest her rightful parents should still be alive and claim her. The ring he asked Stanley to wear: it was a very peculiar one; and who knew, he said, but in distant lands it might be recognized, and prove a clue to its rightful owner.

Stanley took it as a sacred charge, and promised to do what he could to discover to whom it belonged. Could Betty Smith, he asked himself, know anything of the real story of Pansy's birth? Sometimes there was truth beneath or interwoven with the wild fancies of these half-witted beings. He told Mr. Stan-ford of her strange notion about Pansy being the "cuckoo in the finch's nest," and of the scene he had witnessed and of the vow the girl had taken at her supposed mother's grave.

Mr. Stan-ford was deeply affected when he heard it. "God bless her," he said; "but, Stanley, if the day ever comes, as come it may, when she is put to the test, tell her my dying charge to you was, to see she keeps not that vow to her own hurt, nor in the face of a positive duty. Tell her that then more than

ever she will need to put on the magic spectacles to discern clearly the leading of the pillar-cloud."

After that talk the artist and Stanley bowed the knee, and sought counsel and help from their heavenly Father, who "knoweth the end from the beginning," and guideth aright the footsteps of those who seek him through the Lord Jesus.

The next morning Stanley set forth. Pansy and he lingered a few moments on the rocky beach together ere the farewell was said. Their hearts were very full,—too much so for many words. It was early morn; the summer sun was scarcely risen yet, and the mist hung like a purple haze over the sea, shutting out the distant landscape.

"Life looks so dim, so uncertain," Pansy was saying, in a low, mournful tone.

"Yes, dear," he whispered, "it does to the eye of sense; but the dimness and doubt are all from below, Pansy,—from those weak hearts of ours: the light and glory are still overhead, and the guiding hand as well. Look up, Pansy!"

As she did so the golden sunshine burst forth; the "king of day" had risen above the distant hills, and poured a blaze of rosy, golden beauty over land and sea, before which the haze melted away, or only hung here and there in little veils of gold and purple

and crimson beauty. It was a scene never to be forgotten.

"Beautiful emblem of the power of the Sun of righteousness, Pansy; just what we might oftener see if we were to use the God-given spectacles of faith aright. 'Weeping may endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning.' Good-bye, Pansy; I leave you in the keeping of Him who sticketh closer than a brother. May He watch between us while we are absent the one from the other!"

CHAPTER VII.

MISS KEZIA FOX.

"Yes, He knows the way is dreary,
Knows the weakness of our frame;
Knows that hands and heart are weary—
He 'in all points' felt the same.
He is near to help and bless;
Be not weary, onward press."

S Ethel ill also, sister?"

"I fear so, Harry. See how flushed she looks, though she has fallen asleep!" And Pansy seated herself as she spoke, with the child in her arms, on a low stool, so close to her brother's couch, that almost without raising himself he could see the little sleeper.

"Poor wee pet!" he said, as he gently stroked the fair curls that fell round the baby face.

"O Harry," Pansy sighed, "will this gloomy thick weather never go away? If only that damp fog were off, and the air clear again, I think this terrible epidemic would pass. Papa so ill, Charlie fairly

down with it, and now Ethel ; and Susan says Clara is fretful also."

Harry raised himself slightly, and glanced out of the window ; but there was nothing there to cheer. A gray mist obscured the whole view, hiding alike land and sea ; and a small drizzling rain fell, as it had done for some days, so gently that one scarce heard the patter on the autumn leaves that lay in little heaps on the ground, or fell every now and then with a light melancholy rustle from the almost leafless trees. Such weather told too quickly on mind and body, and helped to increase, if it did not originate, the influenza epidemic that pervaded many parts of England at that time, and was doing its deadly work in the little village of Weyford.

As Harry looked out, he thought there surely never had been such a dreary, damp, wretched November day ; and he turned his eyes piteously to poor Pansy, who, exhausted by days of watching by sick-beds, sat, now fairly worn out, yet tending so lovingly the little motherless child in her lap. And somehow, as he gazed, the light within, which in Harry's breast no outward circumstances could long dim, blazed up, and laying his hand on Pansy's bent head he whispered, "As thy day, thy strength shall be."

And with a brighter smile than of yore Pansy

looked up. "I know that, Harry. I have found it. Only I am too weary to look up, or even put on the magic spectacles."

Her voice sounded so low, so strange, that ere Harry had time to note the death-like pallor of her face a panic seized him; and taking the sleeping child from her, with the exclamation, "Sissy, dear, what is the matter?" he got up from the couch only in time to hinder her falling to the ground. She had fainted.

Some hours after that, the carriage of the doctor from the neighbouring small town of Monworth stopped before the gate of one of the neat villa residences in the outskirts of Weyford; and the doctor, a tall, pleasant-faced man of middle age, walked briskly up the little approach, and knocked. Not, however, waiting for any one to answer the knock, he opened the door quickly, and strode without ceremony into a neat little drawing-room on the ground floor, where sat two ladies—one an invalid, who occupied a comfortable arm-chair, the other a sweet-looking lady in the quaint dress of a Quakeress. There was a child, too—a little, old-fashioned, gray-eyed maiden of some seven years, over whom the doctor in his haste nearly stumbled.

"Bless me, always children somewhere," he said, kindly patting her head as he spoke. Then shaking hands with the invalid, he turned hastily to the other lady. "Miss Kezia," he said, "I thought you had been a Christian; but I have found I was mistaken. Here you are so taken up with sending missionaries to convert the Hottentots and Objibewy Indians, or something of that sort, and letting the bravest-hearted lass I ever saw die, or nearly so, from over-work, and never a female hand stretched out to help her. 'Pon my word, it is too bad. Charity should begin at home."

The little child-Quakeress opened her gray eyes wide.

Miss Kezia rose with a troubled look. "Now, doctor," she said, "tell me what is wrong, and who is needing help. Thou knowest I would fain be of use wherever I can; and as to the Hottentots," she said with a smile, "methinks the Christian who gave the largest sum to send the gospel messenger to them was one Dr. Godbye. But now, who is ill?"

"Why, it's not one, I tell you; it's ever so many of that poor artist's family in Rockbeach Cottage. And there's that child-woman, a mother to them all, prostrate now, and never a creature near her save the young servant-girl. And you call yourself a Christian!"

"Now, doctor," said Miss Kezia, "I have no time to put off, or I would preach thee a sermon on the text, 'Judge not, that thou be not judged.' Again and again have we tried to gain admittance to the cottage, and become acquainted with the overworked girl we would so willingly have aided; but, wherefore I know not, she has repulsed us. And at last we gave up the attempt to seek to know her. But now I will be off to the poor child, and see if I can be of use.—Rebecca," she said, "thou wilt not miss me? Hannah will tend thee.—Wilt thou not?" she said tenderly, smiling to the child.

"That I will, Aunt Kezia. Mother shall see what a brave little nurse I can be. And, aunt, please take this new toy—this funny little mouse—to the pretty twin-children; mayhap they will take pleasure in seeing it."

After some hours of feverish sleep, Pansy Stanford awoke, to see a sweet face bending over her, and to feel a gentle woman's hand laying a cold-water cloth on her forehead. For a moment the old spirit of pride asserted its place; but the loving smile, and almost entreatingly spoken words, "Dear child, thou wilt let a friend nurse thee, wilt thou not? and so let an old maid have the pleasure of feeling she is of some use in the world," stayed the words that were

rising to the girl's lips. She tried to speak, but strength failed her, and but for the timely administration of some restorative ordered by the doctor, and quickly and skilfully given by Miss Kezia, she had again fainted.

"Thee must not speak, dear child—not a word. Here, rest thy head on my shoulder, and lie quiet."

And so, greatly to her own surprise, Pansy found herself leaning her head on the shoulder of the despised Quakeress, as she had done on no woman's since her supposed mother had fallen asleep in Jesus. She looked up and smiled; the spirit of pride had vanished for the while, and in her inmost heart the girl was thankful. She closed her eyes from exhaustion, and in a low but singularly beautiful voice Miss Kezia sang a hymn of the love and compassion of Jesus; and the girl was soothed, the restless tossing ceased, and ere long she fell asleep, dreaming that an angel was singing her a song from the land of glory.

As she slept, the Quakeress looked at the beautiful face, and as she saw on it traces of early suffering she sighed.

"Poor child!" she said to herself; "why did I not sooner try what the power of love could do to win thy heart, poor motherless one? Not so easily was my Lord repulsed by me. Again and again he

knocked at my heart, and I refused him a place there; but he waited—oh, so patiently!—never turning away till I opened and he entered."

There was much to be done in that house of sickness. Little Ethel was very ill; Charlie, though better, was weak and fretful; and Mr. Stanford visibly becoming weaker day by day. Only Harry and Clara had as yet escaped the epidemic. Susan, though well now, had been the first to be attacked by it. Miss Kezia's hands were full indeed. Clara had at once been sent to the charge of the Quakeress widow; and though at first unwilling to go, had yielded to Harry's entreaties, and soon attached herself to the little Hannah.

A very sunbeam of light and comfort did the Quakeress prove in that house; day after day, ay, and night after night, found her at her self-imposed task of nursing and cheering. The blind man learned to know and longed for her light step, and in his dreariest hours was cheered by her silvery voice reading to him the words of the Book which had for so long been the support of his heart. Again and again he thanked God, who in the time of their need had sent one to them who had indeed proved as an angel from heaven. Harry, as he looked at her sweet face and cheery smile, strove, as far as his health would allow

him, to help her with the invalids, and felt his faith and trust in God as a present help in trouble strengthened. But her richest reward for all her exertions was when Pansy (able once more to be up, and resuming her household duties) threw herself into her arms, and thanked her with tears of gratitude for all she had done—confessing how sinfully she had acted in having repulsed her in former days.

Not a word of reproach was spoken; but as with a mother's affection she pressed the girl to her heart, she said, "O Pansy, we must try never to refuse our fellow-creatures the joy of doing kindnesses! Thou hast made me and mine very happy, in letting us serve the Lord Christ in the person of his tried children."

A close bond, which lasted through life, from that hour united those two; and from henceforth they bore each other's burdens and shared each other's joys.

The worst was over. Miss Kezia had gone home, winning from the kind-hearted doctor the declaration that he believed after all she was a Christian, and a real one too; and if she wanted a certificate as being an experienced nurse, when she set out to tend the Hottentots, she might apply to him, and she would have it—muttering to himself, as he shook hands

with her at parting, "She may wear what sort of a coloured dress or queer cap she likes; but the price of a woman like that is 'above rubies.' 'She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.' And so she may 'thee' and 'thou' me and everybody else as long as she pleases."

That epidemic swept off many in the little village, and so prostrated the good vicar that he was ordered abroad for a long period, and that ere he was able to see even his friends the Stanfords.

February, with its swelling buds and opening snowdrops, had come round ere the little party at Rockbeach Cottage were restored to their usual health; for even Mr. Stanford had rallied for a while and Pansy, with the little ones beside her, was once more seated in the parlour at work, while Harry was again plying the brush. It was a portrait on which he was engaged, and to which he was putting some finishing touches—the portrait of a sweet-looking lady of middle age, with clear brown eyes and auburn hair. The beauty of the face consisted not so much in the regularity of features, as in the wonderful sweetness, united with power of mouth and a depth of tenderness in the eyes; a snow-white kerchief was folded across the neck and shoulder, and the head-dress was the quaint cap of a Quakeress.

"Dear Miss Kezia," said Pansy, as she raised her eyes from her embroidery to watch her favourite brother's progress. "How well you have caught the expression, Harry. Her smile is almost angelic. Truly I had failed indeed to put on the magic spectacles when I deemed her one to patronize for the boast of so doing."

"Yes, sister mine, you were sorely mistaken there; for if ever there were a meek and lowly spirit walking the earth in the shape of a woman, it is embodied in our friend Miss Kezia. Pansy, do you know that Stanley had found out her worth, little as he saw of her? His eyes are quick to discern the good."

"Yes, I know; Stanley told me so. But"—and she blushed as she spoke—"there was a mist over my eyes then which hindered me seeing many things in their right light—the mist of pride; but I think God's own hand has removed it now—in answer, I know, to many prayers." And as she spoke, the girl laid her hand affectionately on Mr. Stanford's shoulder.

He drew her to him, and kissed her fondly. "Thank God," he said; "the discipline of those last months has been sore, Pansy, but the effect blessed indeed. We have all reason to thank God for sending to us such a friend as the gentle Quakeress."

As they spoke, the door opened, and Miss Kezia entered.

"Talk of the sun, and you'll see its rays," said Harry, as he laid down his brush to join in the hearty welcome with which she was greeted.

"Well, now, 'tis pleasant, sweet hearts, to think thee talkest of me; but indeed, Harry, 'tis not to look at my own picture I have come to-day, nor yet to see thee specially. I have a favour to ask of my kind friend here." And going up to Mr. Stanford, she said, "I want thee to let me have Pansy for a whole day. I have laid such a plan for her; and the twins shall go down and amuse my sister and play with Hannah, and Susan and Harry will take care of the house. So please say thou wilt grant my request, ere Miss Pansy has time to raise difficulties."

"That I will, and right heartily too, Miss Kezia. Pansy is in safe keeping when you take care of her; and Harry and I will for once take care of ourselves, and be a good lesson for us too."

Pansy would have interrupted and opposed the plan—not now from pride, but fearing she would be missed at home. But all her difficulties were overruled.

"Yes, go, Pansy," said Harry; "an outing will do you good; and with Miss Kezia too! Lucky girl!"

And so it was arranged that, if the morrow proved a fine day, Pansy should go an excursion with her friend.

The spring sun shone brightly into the little parlour as they all sat ; and ere Miss Kezia left, Harry reminded Pansy of the dreary November day, when the mist had shut out all brightness in earth and sky. What a contrast from this bright, fresh morning !

“ Yes,” said Miss Kezia ; “ despite our doubts and fears on the subject, life is not all mist and darkness ; light and shade alternate. And maybe we would not care so much for the brightness, were it not for the dark hours. We are not always either at Elim or Marah, children. We have to go through both experiences ; but the old saying will always hold good —‘ Every cloud has its silver lining.’ Only”—and she smiled at Pansy as she spoke—“ we need in the dark day to have on the magic spectacles to see it. Still, it is well to look up to see the bright light in the cloud. But now, ‘ Au revoir.’ Be thou ready betimes to-morrow, Pansy, for I mean to carry thee off in a carriage.” And so saying, she disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIENDS AT THE MANOR.

"We do not always know it, when we have
The privilege to be God's messengers,
Nor who shall be God's messengers to us."

 MABEL, Mabel, do sit still; how you do fidget about! Who or what is it you are looking for out of the window?"

The speaker was an elderly gentleman, who up to the moment of his addressing the young girl in question seemed to have been absorbed in the study of the newspaper which he held in his hand.

The answer to the question was a silvery laugh; then a girl, who looked about twelve years of age, darted to him, and without one bit of ceremony jumped on his knee, pushing aside the paper as she did so, then patting his cheek with the familiarity of a spoilt child, said,—

"You dearest of all dear papas, don't you know what has put me into this fidget? Isn't the queer, nice

Quakeress lady perhaps coming to-day, and bringing with her the girl she told us all about, whom she calls Pansy, and whom she hopes to persuade to come here for a couple of hours daily to play duets along with me, and sing ! For now that that good old London doctor has forbidden me to study for a whole year, and so that horrid Miss Vaughan has left me, mamma says I am forgetting my music—which I don't wish to do ; and so I am going to have the girl come to—not teach me, you know," said the child, with a toss of her head, "but just play to me, and with me, just as a sister a little older than myself might have done,—just, in fact," and here she lowered her voice, "as Marie would have, had she lived. So now you see why I am on the *qui vive* this lovely spring morning,—and there, I declare, is a pony carriage coming up the avenue ;" and so saying, off she flew.

Her father looked after her with affection, half mingled with admiration.

Mabel Percival was indeed most attractive to look at,—her large, dark-blue eyes sparkling with fun, and tenderness as well ; her auburn hair one mass of natural curls, falling round her, and seeming to catch and reflect every flash of sunshine ; the whole expression of her face bright and loving, yet with a delicacy of complexion that startled a close observer by its

transparency. Her light, graceful figure and girlish ways made a stranger guess her at least two years younger than her real age, which was fourteen.

An only child almost since she could remember—for she scarce numbered five summers when a sister six years her senior died—Mabel had been watched over and petted in a way which would have utterly ruined some dispositions; but her ardent powers of loving had as yet kept her at least from selfishness, as the thought of grieving either parent by her faults acted in part in the stead of any fear of punishment. A child brought up in the midst of every luxury, not a trace of premature care or trouble could be read on her brow—not even the reflex one of the troubles of others, for the anxiety her parents felt about her health was carefully concealed from her; yet, despite all these things, there were times when the girl might be seen sitting alone with her eyes fixed on the sky, with a dreamy, far-off look in them, as if some perplexing thoughts were filling her mind. But these times were few, and never except she was certain her parents were not near. Otherwise she was a very sunbeam in her home, both to parents and servants.

Not long had they been at the Manor, the name of the old property which Mr. Percival had lately bought, and at which he proposed to spend some

months of the year, as the doctor thought the air would suit Mabel's health.

It was the guiding hand of God's providence that led them there, though as yet they thought little of him as one who *directeth* the steps of his creatures. And all the while the same wonder-working hand was guiding one of his chosen children to make their acquaintance, both for their benefit and her own. Yet how many do acknowledge his hand as the Maker of the world and the Upholder of it, and bow down and worship him in the greatness of his majesty and power, who fail to see the *same* hand taking note of and ordering every little event in the lives of his creatures, though surely the greatness of his power is as much seen in these little things as in the greater ones. Hallelujah be to God, not only as the Creator of heaven and earth, but as the One who numbereth the hairs and directeth the steps "of his covenant people;" who taketh note of their every thought, and "putteth their tears in a bottle!"

Just as Mabel had discovered the little pony phae-ton hired by Miss Kezia for the day's excursion, Pansy was exclaiming with delight on the beauty of the scenery in the midst of which the Manor-house was situated. The brawling stream, whose course they had followed almost from the time of leaving

Weyford, had now widened into a rivulet, spanned here and there by a rustic bridge, and careering wildly over the large rocky stones which lay imbedded in its channel; while the spring sunshine lit up its foaming waters and brightened with a golden glow the clumps of dark firs that were scattered here and there, and rested in dazzling beauty on the snow-capped peaks of the grand hills which rose right behind the old-fashioned mansion-house.

The whole drive had been one of great enjoyment. At first Pansy had been startled when Miss Kezia had told her of Mrs. Percival's desire that she would help Mabel with her music. Was she competent? she asked; and could she be spared so long from home? But to her amazement Miss Kezia told her she had talked over the whole subject with Mr. Stanford and Harry a week before, and all was arranged. The walk across the fields to the Manor was only three miles, and the Percivals were to send her back in one of their numerous conveyances.

"And never thee trouble about the little ones in thine absence. Hannah and we will see to them, and to the invalids as well."

And in her heart Pansy was well pleased it should be so; for the remuneration she would receive would be very welcome in their household, and her laud-

able desire of earning a livelihood for herself and her loved ones so far promoted.

In the afternoon which followed, Mabel and Pansy became friends,—something in the queenly beauty and dignity of Pansy taking the fancy of the more volatile child; while on her part Pansy was captivated by the frank, winning manners and exceeding loveliness of the spoilt child.

All was satisfactorily arranged. Three days in the week Pansy was to give the morning hours to Mabel; Mrs. Percival promising to have her safely conveyed home.

As they stood at the door waiting for the pony carriage to drive up, she caught the words addressed by Mrs. Percival to Miss Kezia,—

“Many thanks to you, dear Miss Fox, for having introduced your young friend to us. I do believe it is quite a providential arrangement as regards Mabel,—just a happy chance one would not have looked for in this out-of-the-world place.”

“Nay, dear friend, there is no such thing as chance,” answered the Quakeress. “As thou saidst first, I doubt not it is the loving hand of our heavenly Father that has brought it to pass. May the arrangement prove for the good of both these young creatures, and for the glory of God!”

Mabel as well as Pansy caught the last words, and turning half playfully to the speaker, said, "Nay, Miss Fox, do you believe playing the piano can bring glory to God?"

"Who knows, sweet heart?" she said. "It's written, 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' I have a concern on my spirit for thy soul's welfare, Mabel Percival. Thou hast all this world's goods,—art sure thou hast the heavenly ones too, and a place in the home above, my child?" and drawing Mabel to her, she kissed her forehead; then, stepping into the carriage, she took the reins, and Pansy jumping in after her, they drove off.

"Isn't she queer?" said Mabel to her mother. "But I like her; and as to Pansy, mamma, she's just splendid. I am so glad she has agreed to come. Oh me! I wish it were the day after to-morrow." And so saying, she bounded lightly upstairs to tell her French *bonne* all about Pansy.

But that evening, as she sat in her tastefully done-up boudoir watching the early-setting sun crimsoning the snow-crowned hills till they glowed with roseate hues of almost unearthly beauty, Miss Kezia's words rose to her mind and brought a thoughtful shade over her lovely face. "Thou hast all this world's goods,—art sure thou hast the heavenly ones too, and

a place in the home above?" What were they? she wondered. Golden streets and gates of pearl, a harp and a white robe and a golden crown; and then to meet with sister Marie, whom she had so dearly loved,—these were all the heavenly joys that poor Mabel knew anything of; and to-night, as she gazed on the beautiful world around her, and at all the luxuries of her refined home, she wondered if heaven would be more lovely than these. "Hardly," she thought; then repeated half aloud the words, "And a place in the home above." Of course she thought she must know that only the "wicked shall be turned into hell;" but why did she stop as the last words of that verse, lately learned as a task, rose to her lips, "and those who *forget* God"?

She rose quickly. Conscience—nay, say rather the voice of the Holy Spirit within her—was speaking far too loudly for her. "Forget God"—ay, days without number she did that.

She ran to her music library, and began to look out some favourite duets, and hum a merry tune to drown thought; but just then she could not. She glanced once more at the setting sun, but this time she looked above it right up to heaven.

"Marie loved God; Aunt Susan told me so. But I don't; I can't see how."

Little did Mabel guess that at that very time two children of the great King—Harry and Pansy—at Miss Kezia's request, were at the throne of grace presenting the prayer that their Father in heaven would open the eyes of the idolized girl to see Jesus. Yet it was even so ; and whilst they were speaking, in answer to their prayers, Mabel was led for the first time to realize that she did not love God. She was acknowledging herself, almost without knowing it, as a sinner ; and the grace that led her to do that would not leave till she could claim the sinner's Saviour.

Ere she went to sleep that night she opened her beautiful walnut-wood writing-desk, elaborately inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and lined with crimson velvet, and took from it a letter written in a child's hand, inside of which was a curl of brown hair, which she tenderly kissed, then slowly read the letter, not for the first time.

"Darling Mabel," it began, "I leave you as a remembrance of sister Marie my own Bible ; it is the dearest thing I have. I love it so, for out of it I learned about Jesus, the children's friend, who died for us ; and I want you—oh, so much, dear little sister!—to love him too,—won't you, darling ? And be sure to meet me in heaven ; I'll be waiting at the

golden gates for you. You remember the hymn we sing,—

‘ All who love the Lord below,
When they die to heaven will go,
And sing with saints above.
Oh ! that will be joyful !’

You will come, won’t you, darling ? Aunt Susan will tell you as she told me ; and please never forget your loving sister Marie.’

Mabel’s tears fell fast, as they had often done before, when she read this letter ; but that night it was not so much of Marie she thought as of herself. All these years since Marie went to heaven, and she had never learned or tried to love God yet ! She saw now that Marie was glad to go to heaven, not chiefly to see its beauties, but to see the Saviour ; and for the first time in her life Mabel prayed a real prayer, “Lord, teach me how to love and serve thee, for Christ’s sake.” She hardly knew it was a prayer ; she did not bend her knee, which hitherto she called praying, only bowed her head over the letter in her hand ; and let a hot tear fall on the crimson velvet of the desk ; but for all that, in heaven there was a note of praise struck by angel-hands, and along with the incense before the throne there rose to the Father’s ear that word of prayer linked with the name above all names—Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOME SUNBEAM.

"Now turn we to that merry maiden
With azure eye and smooth bright hair,—
A lily blossom fragrance-laden
Is not more fair.

"A spirit full of pleasant brightness,
That speaks from lip, and cheek, and brow,
To whose glad spell of cheering lightness
E'en grief must bow."



SPRING, with its tender, green, and delicately tinted flowers, was passing almost imperceptibly into the richer, brighter hues of summer, when Mabel and Pansy (the music lesson finished) sat in the deep recess of an old-fashioned window, now talking, now musing in girl fashion.

Two months of daily intercourse had drawn these two very close to each other: Mabel loving to lean on the stronger and more developed character of her friend; Pansy on her part turning gladly from the cares of womanhood, which had too early weighed down her spirits, to rejoice with the gayer nature of

the spoilt child of fortune. They did each other good; and long ere the day we write of, Pansy had discovered that beneath Mabel's playful, childish manner there were depths of thought and powers of affection of no mean sort.

The silence, which had lasted some time, was at last broken by Mabel.

"Pansy," she said, fixing her eyes earnestly on her friend's face as she spoke, "do you believe in a God?"

Pansy looked up quickly, amazed both at the question and the voice of the questioner. "Certainly, Mabel; surely even the wonders of nature we are looking at now speak of him. Every blade of grass and beautifully tinted flower, as well as these lofty mountains, bear his impress."

"Yes, I know," interrupted Mabel; "I don't mean that. But do you believe in a God who knows all about his creatures,—even insignificant ones like me, —and who cares—"

"Ah yes, Mabel," said Pansy, taking her friend's hands into hers and drawing her nearer, "surely I do. A Father, Mabel, who knows all about the creatures he has made, and numbers the very hairs of our heads, guiding every step in our lives, who so loved us as to give his own Son for us. You believe in him, and love him too, Mabel?"

The child bent her head low. "I think I do, Pansy; but only very, very lately,—only since I have known Miss Kezia and you."

"Me, Mabel!"

"Yes. It's not that you have spoken to me about those things ; but I have watched, and I have found out you don't live to please yourself, as I do. And then, when you speak to me about your patient, blind father, or your good, brave brother Harry, I have made out that in all your troubles you have something I have not to keep you up—'a Friend to go to in every time of need.' That's what Miss Kezia told me she had ; and, Pansy, I think"—and here she spoke low, as if afraid to say the words—"I know who that Friend is now, and am learning to trust in him as my Friend too. Marie did ; she loved Jesus also. But I feel so useless. Only think how old I am, fourteen and a half, and I have never been of use to any one in all my life!"

"O Mabel, don't speak nonsense ; only think what a comfort you are to your parents, and how Mr. Percival says you are the very sunshine of his life."

"Oh well, yes ; but then I can't help being a comfort to them—I love them so. Still, I am not sure I have ever denied myself one pleasure to please them,

or given up my own pursuits, as you have done, to help them in anything."

"Oh, but, dear, we are differently situated. Since my loved mother's death I have had to care for others. Just fancy if Ethel and Clara had had no one to attend to them, if you had been in my place you would have done the very same, Mabel. Still, if you tried, I believe you could find out many ways to be of use both to your parents and to others."

"I wonder how."

"Put on the magic spectacles, Mabel, and you will be astonished how many duties they will show you lying close beside you."

"The 'magic spectacles,' Pansy!"

"Yes." And then Pansy told her pupil-friend all about the conversations Stanley, Harry, and she had had regarding these spectacles; and how, when difficulties arose, the wearing them made all the difference, for they showed that there was with them One who could overcome all difficulties, and remove or help them to bear all trials. "They are the spectacles of faith, Mabel; and God's own hand must put them on our eyes. Once there, it is wonderful what they show both as regards our duties and our hopes. When we wear them, we see the 'guiding pillar' of his hand in every detail of life."

Mabel rose quickly in the old childish way, clapping her hands. "Thank you,—thank you, Pansy. I do believe I see some things I've got to do that won't please myself, and some that may be of use and yet will please me, oh, so much!" and she began dancing about the room like a very sprite, as indeed she was.

Just then the carriage drove to the door, and Mrs. Percival appeared, ready to take Pansy back to Weyford, as she had some business to transact in the village.

That evening Mr. Percival was somewhat surprised when, at the hour he devoted to letter-writing—business letters for a large property in Scotland, managed in his absence (for Mabel's health) by a factor, gave him much to do in the way of correspondence—a low knock came to the study door, and the bright face and fairy figure of Mabel presented itself.

"Heyday, what now? Everything in its time and place, Mabel. I am busy, dear, but will be in the drawing-room presently, ready for my little girl and everything that is pleasant. A study is no place for a fairy."

"Not even if they are useful ones?" said a bright smiling face. Then, changing her tone, she said gravely, "Indeed, papa, I have come to help. You know you said the other night I wrote well and

cleanly, and you only wished I would turn it to some use, and help you in letter-writing, and I said I could never do that, I hated letter-writing; but now, please let me try. Papa, I don't want to grow up a useless fine lady, like—" she was going on to mention a friend of theirs sometimes quoted as an example of uselessness and fine-ladyism, but she checked herself, and said, "like what one reads of in books. I want to help you, as Pansy does her father and brothers."

Mr. Percival smiled, inwardly well-pleased, but never doubting this was only some passing fancy of his spoiled bairn, as he called her. However, he availed himself eagerly of the help, and gave her one or two letters of which he wished to keep a copy.

She did them in a painstaking way, and was well rewarded by her father's evident pleasure, and his approval expressed in the words, "Very neatly done, Mabel. I had no idea my fairy belonged to the Brownie order, of which old Sandy used to tell us such wonders when we were children. I shouldn't wonder if mamma finds some of her work done some night while she sleeps."

After that day, it was wonderful how many little opportunities of helping Mabel found, and how much more painstaking she became with her lessons. Her *bonne* declared something had changed the little

lady, her room was so tidy, and her coiffure not so very soon rumpled. These were but the *little* things which marked the change in the thoughtless girl, but they made (as little things so often do) a great change in the comfort of the home-life, not only of Mabel, but of others. And in her heart Mrs. Percival blessed the day that brought Pansy Stanford to the Manor.

The whole of that summer was a very happy one to Pansy, and through her to Harry likewise. Mabel was not long in finding her way to Rockbeach Cottage, where she proved herself a very angel of light, flashing in and out like some bright meteor or Eastern fire-fly, as Miss Kezia called her. She soon won all hearts. Harry never wearied looking at her and watching her graceful figure as she flitted about, now arranging some of the exquisite hot-house flowers she had brought to please the fastidious eye of the young artist, now unfastening a basket filled with the choicest grapes, purple and green, resting on their own graceful leaves; then coaxing Mr. Stanford in her winning way to taste them, and tell her if Alfred the gardener was right in saying they were the very finest grapes in Wales.

As to the twins (now outgrowing Stanley's pet name of the "babes in the wood"), this lovely Miss Mabel Percival, with her beautiful little carriage and

its two cream-coloured ponies, appeared to be some fairy princess in a story-book dispensing precious gifts and loving words wherever she went, if not dropping gold and pearls every time she spoke. On her part, these twin-girls were her perfect delight; and, despite some grave remonstrances from Pansy, she presented them with the most lovely white muslin pelisses, finished with lace and pink ribbon by her *bonne*, with a taste that only a Frenchwoman can attain to. And dressed in which, with the daintiest little boots and white chip hats with pink bows, she carried them and Hannah Gurney off in the pony carriage to spend the day with some other little friends at the Manor; from which Ethel and Clara returned in a perfect delirium of delight, to fall asleep and dream over the pleasures of the day.

Yet, with all this, even Pansy was never allowed to feel she was conferring a favour; and any attempt at thanks was rejected with—"What a fuss about nothing! Only a few flowers which were just wasting for want of being seen. And as to fruit, why, Pansy, just look round our garden, and say if it is not a sin to let all that grows there actually rot for want of people to eat it, in spite of the hampers papa sends to friends?"

"But the pelisses and hats, Mabel dear. Really

you must not. You'll teach these children a love of dress, and in their circumstances it's positively wrong."

But the remonstrance had no weight with Mabel. "Love of dress, Pansy! A piece of muslin that was lying in my drawer for ever so long, and some bits of ribbon mamma had given me to tie back my hair with! Really, now you are ridiculous! Had it been silk or satin, then you might have talked about love of finery. Dear Miss Kezia wears white muslin as a kerchief, you know, and thinks it no sin; and you would not have the babes dressed more soberly than a Quakeress!"

After that Pansy could say no more, and Mabel continued unreproved to enjoy herself in dispensing pretty gifts like a fairy princess; and if Miss Kezia would not wear pink ribbon, or even allow bright-coloured covers in her drawing-room, Mabel at least contrived to keep it filled with the brightest of flowers, and made her friend confess that God, at all events, saw no sin in pretty gay colours, or he would not have pencilled the flowers with such brilliant tints.

Miss Kezia smiled. "Ah, but thou seest, dear friend, the Lord knoweth that the flowers will not be vain of their beauty, as we are apt to be."

And at that Mabel would laugh her merry ringing laugh, and declare that she had been so accustomed to wear pretty things all her life, she believed if she began to wear browns and drabs she would more likely be vain of them ; and then, throwing her arms round her friend's neck, would ask her pardon for all her rudeness, and declare she would not, for worlds, see Miss Kezia dressed otherwise than she was ; adding with a sly smile, as she slipped a richly-tinted crimson rose into the waistband which fastened the snow-white kerchief, " There, now, that is just the finishing touch to the whole, and corresponds beautifully with the pretty bows my *bonne* finishes off my muslin dresses with."

Yes, in the house of the quiet Quakeress, as well as in Rockbeach Cottage, the bright young girl was proving a sunbeam ; and from both houses she carried away lessons of self-denial and devotion to the welfare of others.

But her eyes were not long in discerning that the means of the Stanfords were very limited, and that at times they were sorely pinched for want of money, which she intuitively felt could only be supplied to them if they earned it themselves.

Ere long Mabel was seized with an ardent desire to have a portrait of her mother expressly for her own

boudoir, and she discovered no likenesses were so good as those which Harry Stanford took, and so she persuaded Mrs. Percival to sit to him—a request which Mr. Percival granted willingly when he saw the likeness Harry had taken of Miss Kezia. And Mabel was wild with delight when he said, if the young artist succeeded well with Mrs. Percival, they would like him to try his hand on their little Sunbeam herself.

Nothing that Mabel had done gave such true pleasure to her friend as this of giving Harry work. It was such joy to him to feel he could help to maintain those dear to him by the gift he had received from God.

The summer and autumn months of that year passed on pleasantly for the inmates of Rockbeach Cottage. Letters came from Stanley, full of delight with his travelling companion, and of the wonderful places and scenery through which they passed,—letters filled with wise, fresh thoughts and loving messages. He had heard of Pansy's new friends, and rejoiced that at last she had realized her dependence on her fellow-creatures.

"You see" (he concluded his letter with) "that through the mist the sun is rising, and even though as yet it has not dispelled it, still, by your own con-

fession, the grayness of it has become tinged with silvery brightness; and by-and-by, in God's good time, the sun will shine right through it, and leave in rosy colours letters written, which, by the aid of the magic spectacles, you will be able distinctly to read as the loving-kindness of the Lord."

And as Pansy read aloud these words to her father, he bent his head in reverence, and said: " 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' "

CHAPTER X.

THE GOLD BRACELET.

"Oh, Christmas!—merry Christmas!
Is it really come again—
With its memories and greetings,
With its joy and with its pain?
There's a minor in the carol,
And a shadow in the light,
And a spray of cypress twining
With the holly wreath to-night."

"CHRISTMAS is coming!—Christmas is coming!" sang the children as they ran merrily down the rocky beach at Weyford, dressed in cozy fur-trimmed frocks, to watch the waves in their boisterous glee breaking upon the rocks.

"They too," said Ethel, "are saying, 'Christmas is coming soon—so soon.' Aren't they, Clara?"

But Clara shook her head—she did not catch the words. But Miss Mabel had told her she had heard the little robin redbreasts at the Manor saying that, so perhaps the waves did also.

Indeed, Christmas joy was reigning in many house-

holds in that neighbourhood on those sharp frosty days, and Christmas comforts also were in many of the cottages of the poor that year, to which formerly they had been strangers. And why? Just because one bright little girl, to whom God had given largely of this world's goods, had learned the lesson that her own happiness was not to be the aim of her life, but the following Him who pleased not himself, and who had taught her it was *more* "blessed to give than to receive."

Neither Pansy nor any of the Stanford children ever forgot that Christmas, so full was it of kind remembrances from friends, mingled with words of holy counsel! Love and peace seemed to reign in the hearts of all; and the sweet Christmas carols were sung from hearts full of gratitude. Only dear Mr. Bradsley was awanting to complete their happiness, and the Vernons; but they knew, though distant one from another, they were fondly remembered.

Amongst other Christmas gifts, Pansy was surprised and somewhat grieved at getting on her table a beautiful, quaintly-carved bracelet, with the initials "H. B."

"From Mabel, I am sure," she said. "How could she! It is far too costly a gift; and she must see I never wear ornaments. Oh! I wish she had not given

me this. Might I return it, I wonder? I will consult papa;" and so saying, she took it in her hand and went into her father's room.

Christmas greetings over, she told him of her present, and of her annoyance about it. "She ought not to have given me such a costly gift—ought she, papa?"

"Who?"

"Why, Mabel, of course."

"How do you know it was she gave it to you? Did she say so?"

"No; but who else would do so?"

"I did."

"Papa—you!"

"Yes; and I hope my Pansy will indulge a blind man in a whim he has, that you will wear the bracelet as often as possible. Come, now, my darling, and let me clasp it on your wrist."

"Oh, papa! if it is your present I will wear it as often as you please, and value it above everything. May I ask if it belonged to mamma? I never remember seeing her wear it."

"She never did, though she had it in her possession from the time you were a baby. It was her desire that when you were old enough you should wear it. She was a kind mother to you, Selina."

"Kind!—oh! far more than that. I think no

children could have had kinder parents than we have had, papa."

He drew her fondly to his side, and kissed her lovingly. "God bless you for these words, my pet; and now, ere we join the rest, let us thank God for his 'unspeakable gift.'"

Pansy never forgot that prayer, nor the touch of the father's hand that rested on her head during it. Ere another Christmas-day dawned, what would she not have given to feel it there once more!

The last night of the year had come, and somewhat reluctantly Pansy had accepted an invitation to a quiet party at the Manor; but only on the condition that she should be allowed to return home early, that she might be with her father and brothers and sisters as the new year dawned.

Very lovely, nay, strikingly handsome she looked that evening, in her neatly fitting black silk dress, made high to the throat, where it was finished off by a fall of rich white lace (the gift of Mabel), fastened by a knot of bright pink ribbon, her only ornament the antique gold bracelet. She wore her hair with its massive plaits as usual, the one worn coronet-way across her head.

At the door Mabel met her.

"Well, you do look queenly to-night, Pansy—just as I wished you to do; for we have some of our Scotch neighbours visiting us, and I wanted you to look your best. But stop one moment." She bounded off, returning in a moment with a lovely pink camelia, with its glossy leaves, in her hand. "See here, you dear good Pansy! you must wear this, just to please me;" and so saying, she slipped it into Pansy's raven locks, and fastened it securely. "Now, you are perfect," she said, and led her into the drawing-room.

More than one look of admiration was cast at her that evening, for Pansy's beauty and dignity of bearing were of no ordinary kind. Her manners, too, were simple and unaffected. Her music was fully appreciated; and, at the request of a Scotch gentleman, she sang some of the Welsh airs she had picked up since they had come to Weyford. He stooped over her to turn the leaves of her music, when his eye rested on the gold bracelet. Something in its make appeared to strike him, and so to rivet his attention that he failed to turn the next page at the right moment.

When the song was finished he apologized, adding,—"The fact was, if you will excuse my rudeness in saying so, the chaste peculiar workmanship of your bracelet struck me; all the more so as I never saw

but one like it, and that belonged to the wife of a namesake of my own, a Mr. Bruce; and this, too, like the one I allude to, is probably an old heirloom—the work likely of the same artist."

"I hardly know its history," she said. "I have no doubt, however, it is old. It belonged, I believe, to my mother. Would you like to examine it more closely?" she asked with a good-humoured smile; and unfastening the clasp, she put it into his hand.

He thanked her, and taking it to the light looked at it. "Curious," he said. "It exactly resembles the one I thought of, and which I remember specially from a discussion we had about it in a jeweller's shop, where I first saw it. My young friend Bruce had called to get it, as the jeweller had been repairing the clasp; and on my expressing admiration of it he showed it me particularly, telling me it had belonged to his grandmother, and was an old heirloom, which he had inherited from his mother, and now was taking as a present to his wife, whom I had never seen. He said, also, there was a secret about the bracelet known only to himself—a secret spring, which opened that thick-looking part, and was large enough to hold a small miniature. He was going to show it to me when more customers came in, and saying 'Another time,' slipped it into his pocket and walked off. Poor

fellow! I never saw him again. Some family quarrel sent him and his young wife to America, and the vessel they sailed in was wrecked, and all lives, with the exception of three of the crew, were said to be lost." Whilst he spoke, he turned the bracelet round and round, and exclaimed,—"Why, this *is* the very bracelet! See! here are my friend's grandmother's initials, which he showed me,—H. B.,—standing, as he said, for Henrietta Bruce; which name was his own mother's also, and as she married a cousin of her own, a Bruce also, it suited her as well. Excuse my curiosity, but perhaps your mother was a Bruce likewise!"

"Oh no," said Pansy; but as she spoke the old story of the cuckoo and the finches came into her mind, and she flushed crimson.

Ere she could command her voice to speak again, Mabel, with girlish curiosity to see what was going on, had joined them; and just then Mr. Bruce pressed on a spot on the bracelet, and the back part of what had looked like a solid knot of beautifully chased gold opened, and displayed an exquisitely painted very small picture,—the head of a lady.

"Then you knew the trick," he said, smiling at Pansy's face of perplexity.

"No; why do you think so?"

"Why, this is a portrait of yourself; and a very good one too, though your hair is dressed in a different fashion."

"O Pansy! how like it is! Who did it? Not Harry, surely."

"Indeed, you are all mistaken," she said in a strangely agitated tone. "It is not my portrait. I never saw it in my life; and I am sure my father does not know of the existence of the spring. Please give it to me. I will ask him about it when I go home."

"Possibly," said Mr. Bruce, returning the bracelet, "it may be the portrait of your mother when she was your age; if so, you are singularly like. Excuse me for my seeming curiosity. I am afraid I have troubled you; but I have so often longed to know if Archie Bruce were really drowned, that the sight of the bracelet made me fancy it might be a clue to his fate."

Pansy strove in vain not to show her agitation. A moment longer, and she would have broken down; but Mr. Bruce was called away, and left alone she recovered herself. But all the words she heard after that were to her void of meaning, for in her own heart she knew now that Betty Smith's words were no delusion of a wandering brain, but strict truth.

She had gazed, she felt, on the features of her own mother, and these features were *not* those of Mrs. Stanford.

She drove home as in a dream, scarcely noting the star-spangled sky overhead, or the white-robed earth beneath. She was conscious only of one desire—that of throwing herself into her supposed father's arms, and entreating him to tell her what he knew of her parentage. Again and again she pressed her hand on the gold bracelet, to make sure the whole story had not been a dream.

She was first awoke from her state of half stupor by the sudden stopping of the carriage, and that not opposite the gate of Rockbeach Cottage. Looking out to ascertain the reason of this, she saw another carriage at the gate, and in a moment she recognized it as that of Dr. Godbye.

Her senses were acute enough now. The doctor there at that hour,—something must be far wrong; and with a pang of sharp regret at having left her loved ones for her own pleasure, she pushed open the carriage door, and ran hastily up the snow-covered path to the cottage. The first person she met (almost throwing her down in her eagerness to enter) was Miss Kezia. She waited for no words.

"My father!" she said, and was darting to his

room, not heeding the gentle hand that Miss Kezia laid on her to detain her; but a stronger one held her fast, and Dr. Godbye spoke.

"Quietly, Miss Pansy, unless you want to kill your father. He is alarmingly ill, but he still lives and is conscious. The least emotion will hasten the end. Compose yourself, and I will take you in; I am sure he wants you."

In a moment the excited girl was herself once more. An instant of heartfelt prayer to God for strength and help, and she was ready to go with the doctor.

Quietly she slipped to her father's side. It needed no experienced eye to see the signs of death on his face; but he evidently recognized her, and a smile of welcome greeted her. She stooped over him and gently kissed his forehead. All thoughts of self were laid aside; and during the three days that followed ere the end came, the very remembrance of the events of the party at the Manor seemed to pass from her mind. Every moment was occupied in tending the sick one. She gladly handed over to her friend Miss Kezia the care of the little ones and the household.

Only once did she make an allusion to what had happened, and that was when told that Mabel (who had heard of Mr. Stanford's sudden illness) was in

the parlour, but had said she would not disturb her.

"Mabel," she said dreamily, as if the name had recalled some painful association. "Oh! tell her she must not speak about the gold bracelet."

But on Miss Kezia asking why, she changed the subject, and seemed vexed at having mentioned it.

Faithfully, lovingly was Mr. Stanford watched to the end. Speech returned, but the words spoken were few.

"God bless you all," was his longest sentence. And once raising his eyes to Pansy's, he said, "The babes—keep them."

And Pansy bent over him and said, "God helping me, I will be true to all the children."

Harry and she were alone with him when the end came. Pansy's arms were round him. Harry, with stifled sobs, prayed that Jesus would be with him through the valley. The last word on his lips was "Jesus." Truly of him it could be said—

"The music of that name
Refreshed his soul in death."

One deep sigh, and the spirit fled. The blind eyes were opened; and the ransomed soul saw "the King in his beauty, and the land that was afar off."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET DISCLOSED.

"A step that is weary ever,
A restless fevered dream ;
The moaning wind, and the storm wrack,
Instead of the golden gleam ;
A secret of silent yearnings,
Guarded with bitter pain ;
The bright wine lost from the chalice,
The chalice broken in twain."



THE funeral was over ; the few friends who had come from a distance to attend it had all left. Only Mr. Vernon remained, anxious to do what he could to help the orphan children. He was alone now with Harry. Pansy had left the room. Her manner had amazed her old friend ; she seemed like one moving about in a dream—calm, emotionless, fulfilling all the household duties—self-possessed, but unnatural.

"If Stanley were only here," sighed Mr. Vernon ; "he understands her—I never did. She was peculiar from her childhood ; but her affections were deep, and she truly loved her father. This strange calm is

rather from excess of grief than the reverse. Harry, have you spoken to your sister? Does she break down before you?"

"No," said Harry; "she puzzles me greatly. She seems utterly changed, so unlike herself; and even Miss Kezia can make nothing of her. Poor Pansy! she has been overworked, Mr. Vernon, ever since our mother died. And you know how kind our cousin the artist, Mr. Desborough, has been, offering to give me a home with himself and his wife in London, and to obtain the best teachers of painting for me. I saw at once God's guiding hand in the matter, but feared to propose accepting the offer to Pansy, knowing how she clings to me. But when I ventured to do so, her reply startled, nay, hurt me: 'Yes, Harry, it is best so. I am glad you have such a home offered to you. It would be impossible for us to keep together now; and as Mr. Vernon has kindly taken Charlie to finish his education, I will be able to manage somehow with the little girls.' No tear in her eye, no word of grief at parting. Oh, Mr. Vernon, it is hard to bear. Only once have I heard her express a wish, and that was after having read a letter my father left for her. She turned pale as death, and said, 'I wish I could see Betty Smith.'"

Mr. Vernon started. A conversation with Stanley,

held shortly after Pansy had gone to Rockbeach Cottage, rose to his remembrance; but he said nothing.

Presently he rose and sought Pansy. He found her coiled up in an arm-chair in the room her father had occupied. An open letter was on her knee; and Mr. Vernon rejoiced to see an open Bible lying beside her, on which rested a gold bracelet. She was reading the letter as he entered, and on seeing him was rising and assuming her usual calm manner. He went up to her kindly, but with a look of determination in his face which reminded her of Stanley.

Gently he put her back in the chair, and seated himself beside her, taking her hand in his, and forcing her to meet his eye.

"Pansy," he said, "you know your father has left me as your guardian, and in that character (since you will not treat me as a friend) I insist on your telling me what is weighing on your mind. Well do I know how you grieve for the loss of the kindest of parents, but that is not the only cause of your crushed spirit. What is it, Pansy? I must know. Already I suspect, but I would rather hear it from your own lips."

She turned quickly at these words. "Suspect what, Mr. Vernon?"

Her look alarmed him; but he answered quietly,

"That you were not really the child of the Stanfords."

She rose passionately, and threw herself on her knees before him, saying entreatingly, "Oh, Mr. Vernon, tell me—tell me, since you know, whose child then am I? Why was I not told this long ago? Why was I allowed to eat the bread of charity, and receive the fondest love and care from those who were bound to me by no ties of blood? Oh, it was cruel, cruel! There, read that!"

She put the letter into his hand, and then came a long and fearful paroxysm of choking sobs and tears.

Firmly he raised her, and reseated her; letting her weep on, only gently whispering, "Poor Pansy! God help you, my child."

She pressed her head on the pillow and cried on.

Silently he read the letter. It was couched in the kindest of terms, but it told Pansy all that Stanley had heard before his departure from the artist himself. It told her that she was no child of those who had so fondly tended her and brought her up; but it threw no light as to who her real parents were. It told also that the bracelet and ring had been found with her, and no doubt belonged to her parents.

Mr. Vernon sat silent, lost in thought. Presently the sobs ceased. The girl looked up; the cold, proud,

stony look had left her eyes—only deep sorrow shone in them.

“ You have read it ? ” said she. “ Well, of what are you thinking ? ”

“ Of the wonderful goodness of God to you, Pansy. Truly, when father and mother forsook you, he took you up, and provided for you the kindest and best of parents, who so cared for you that they spared you the pain of knowing you were not one of their own little ones. You have great reason to thank your heavenly Father for his love to you. With loving-kindness and tender mercies he has guided you hitherto, and do you think he will leave you now ? You would not so mistrust any earthly friend ; and yet which of them has loved you as Jesus has ? ” As he spoke he drew the girl into his arms and let her head rest on his shoulder, as Mr. Stanford had so often done. “ ‘ God is love,’ Pansy ; you know it.”

A low answer came. “ Yes, I know it ; and yet I had thought hard things of his dealings these last few days.”

“ Hard thoughts of our loving Father, Pansy ! and he so loved us he spared not his Son. Was ever love like unto that love ? ”

The girl’s tears were falling now; soft tears of repentance and grief for having doubted the love of

Him who had so cared for her. Softly she whispered, "Father, forgive me, for Christ's sake."

And Mr. Vernon laid his hand on her head, and carried on the prayer, making confession of sin, and seeking help in this sore trial, and guidance in the path of perplexity. When the low yet heartfelt Amen was uttered, he added solemnly God's own blessed promise, "I will make darkness light before thee, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto thee, and not forsake thee."

And the spirit of the sorrow-stricken girl was comforted. The Great Comforter was speaking silently in her heart.

Mr. Vernon would fain have left her in quiet, but time was pressing. There was much to be settled, and he must return to his parish in a couple of days. She roused herself. The great weight was off her heart; the spectacles of faith were already showing her things in a truer light; and in a composed but natural way she told her old friend the story of the gold bracelet, and showed him the portrait. He started as he saw the striking resemblance to herself; plainly it must be that of her mother. One thing must be done, and that quickly. He must try to see Mr. Bruce, if he was still at the Manor, and track out, if possible, the history of the bracelet.

He had not long to wait. That very afternoon Mabel drove down to ask for her friend, and told in a passing way that Mr. Bruce was in the carriage. Of course he would not think of intruding at such a time, but he had asked her to tell Miss Stanford how grieved he felt for her.

Instantly Mr. Vernon left the room, and Pansy's heart beat fast as she heard him soon re-enter the house accompanied by another, whom she doubted not was Mr. Bruce, and together they went into the parlour. They remained there long.

Mabel wondered at the strange absent replies her friend gave to many of her questions, little suspecting the suspense she was in.

When Mr. Bruce had heard Mr. Vernon's story of the letter Mr. Stanford had written, telling Pansy that she was a foundling, laid one winter night at their door when they lived in the village of Tyndale, in the north of England, he doubted no longer that she was the child of his friend Arthur Bruce; though why, when the parents had gone to America, they should have left their child behind, was a puzzle. Still more so, how she should have been taken to the house of Mr. Stanford.

Arthur Bruce's parents had died whilst he was still a child, and he had been adopted by his uncle

Bruce of Esk Castle, in the south of Scotland ; a hard, proud man, but who in his own way was fond, or at least proud of the boy, whom he brought up as his heir. He had been married for some years ere Arthur came to live at Esk Castle, and Mrs. Bruce had never taken kindly to the boy, though she had no family of her own. Early in life he had made an imprudent marriage—at least his uncle had thought so; and hard words having passed between them on the subject, Arthur was disinherited, and about eighteen months after his marriage had started for America with his wife.

Mr. Bruce thought he had heard of the birth of a child, but was not sure ; but he doubted not that Pansy was their child, as most assuredly that gold bracelet was the one Arthur had shown him as being his present to his young wife, and Miss Stanford's likeness to the portrait was almost certain proof that it was the picture of her mother. He had never heard the name of the person his friend had married. He believed she was well-born but poor, and he knew at the time of the marriage she was acting as companion to a lady in the north of England.

One thing was settled ; he was returning to Scotland, and would at once make further inquiries regarding Arthur Bruce's history, and find out if his

uncle or aunt knew of the birth of a child. He supposed there was little doubt that both he and his wife were lost on their way to America. There had been doubt as to Arthur having gone in that vessel, but there was nothing positive known on the subject. Should Pansy prove to be the child, he held out little hopes of the Esk Castle Bruces doing anything for her. They were hard, unforgiving people.

That night Mr. Vernon told the whole story to Harry; and when Pansy, a little later, was left alone with him, it was Harry's loving words and full sympathy that most of all quieted her aching heart. Not one word would he let her say about the expense and trouble her upbringing must have been to her supposed parents.

"Hush, Pansy," he said in a tone of authority; "well do I know how you have more than repaid all that. Think what you have been to us all ever since our mother's death. What could we have done without you, our more than sister? Look up, Pansy, and you will see in everything that has happened God's hand providing in the most loving way for your good and ours. How I grieve to leave you now; but that also is of God; and if my strength admits of it, I will work hard, so that the burden of the little ones' keep shall not all fall on you. Besides, it may be, your

own relations, who have a right to you, may claim you, and offer you a home."

The girl raised her head, a look of hard determination on it Harry had rarely of late seen there. "A home for me, Harry, shall also be a home for the little ones. God helping me, nothing save death shall part us. As your mother was true to me, when my own parents threw me off, so shall I be true to her little ones, and lavish on them the love she and your father gave to me."

Harry could say nothing. In his heart he felt that in Pansy's position he would have acted likewise.

There were many arrangements to be made. Charlie was to accompany Mr. Vernon home, and remain with him a year or two at all events. Harry had at once to go to London; his kind friend Mr. Desborough coming for him, after paying a visit of a few days to a friend in the neighbourhood. Pansy and the twin-girls were to remain for some months, at all events, at Rockbeach Cottage, receiving as boarders a widow lady and a little girl, friends of Dr. Godbye, who had been desirous for some time to get lodgings in Weyford. So all seemed providentially arranged; and when able to resume her duties Pansy would continue her teaching at the Manor.

The parting with Harry, Charlie, and Mr. Vernon

was a very sore one ; but, as usual, it was Harry's calm words of faith and love that cheered her.

"Good-bye, sister Pansy. God bless you for all you have been to me and mine. Fear not, God ever liveth. 'Because he has been our help, therefore under the shadow of his wings will we put our trust;' 'Weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.' It is his hand separates us for a while, therefore it must be well. Look through the magic spectacles, Pansy, and see amidst all our perplexities the loving Saviour going before us. One day we will look back on all the way he has led us, and see it was the 'right way.'"

And so they parted, brother and sister still, in a bond closer than that of earth ; for is it not written that all who do the will of their heavenly Father are brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus, and in him united one to another ?

It was in Miss Kezia's arms Pansy fell asleep that night. It was from her lips she heard the evening blessing—"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee ; the loving Jesus fold thee in his arms, and abide with thee." And in her heart Pansy felt how faithful the Lord had been to her in having gone before her, and sought out for her such a friend to be her comforter and help in her time of need. Truly, he never leaves, never forsakes those who put their trust in him.

CHAPTER XII

THE VOW KEPT.

"Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand upon the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me."

UITELY Pansy resumed the duties of life,—her household cares, her tending of the little ones, her daily teaching at the Manor. Outwardly, few saw any difference. Perhaps a graver expression in the lustrous dark eyes, deeper lines of thought on the face—that was all. But there was a marked change for all that, which those who knew her well felt more than saw.

It was to herself as if she had begun a new life. One aim was steadily before her—to gain an independence for herself and the little ones. The plan of a boarder did well enough for the present, but it could not be a permanent arrangement; and Pansy looked forward to having at no distant time to leave Weyford and go with the children to some town

where she could get more teaching. Sometimes, as she talked over the subject with Miss Kezia, she would express a desire to go at once, or at all events ere the winter set in; but the Quakeress quietly advised her to bide the Lord's will.

"Take thee care, dear child, of running before the Lord. The pillar has not moved as yet; no opening has turned up; and thy duties lie here. Mayhap the Lord has work for thee to do in this place ere the call cometh, 'Arise, and go forth.' Ere the Israelites moved, they had not only to see the pillar of cloud rise, but to hear as well the sound of the silver trumpets. It is natural, no doubt, for the young to wish to go from place to place, but it is not always the wisest course to do so. No doubt at times the Lord says, 'Go forward;' but as often he says, 'Your strength is to sit still.'"

Pansy at these words sighed, for a strange restlessness was on her, and in the cottage where all her loved ones had once dwelt she missed sorely the accustomed faces and the loving voices—one of which, at least, she would see and hear no more on earth.

Mr. Bruce, true to his promise, had written soon after his return to Scotland to Mr. Vernon. He had made every inquiry about Arthur Bruce's history before he left for America, and found that his uncle

and aunt had heard of the birth of a child shortly before that; and they seemed also to have reason to believe that the child was not taken to America, its tender age making it undesirable to do so till they were settled in some place, when they were to have sent for it. They also knew it had been left with an old nurse, a pensioner of the Bruce family; but when they had visited her some years before, she said she knew nothing of the child. She had only kept her a few weeks. And as they were not the least desirous of knowing more about the matter, they asked no more; and shortly after, the old woman had died.

When told the story of the gold bracelet and Pansy's likeness to the portrait in it, they had seemed interested, and said they had no doubt she was the child of Arthur Bruce; but it was nothing to them. Arthur had been disinherited, and no child of his had any claim on them. They also refused to tell the name of the lady whom he had married; and so the matter dropped.

Letters from Stanley had also been received, full of affectionate sympathy and advice. He told Pansy all that Mr. Stanford had told him the day before his departure, and also the story of the ring; which, he added, unlike the gold bracelet, had attracted no attention, though he had worn it in many parts of

the world. He was most anxious to hear the result of Mr. Bruce's visit to Esk Castle ; but from what his father had written to him, he expected little from that.

"Poor Pansy," he wrote, "yours is indeed a rough path just now. Fain would I be with you to comfort and help ; but my stay abroad is likely to be prolonged yet a while, and I know that you have a stronger Helper than me ever near, who is training you in lessons of faith and patience for his appointed work for you. Do not forget that *all* the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to those who keep his commands."

And so the days wore on ; dull, leaden ones they seemed to Pansy,—spring days, but with the sun gone out of them,—gray skies, with only here and there a bit of blue shining through them, which she would have failed to notice had not Mabel, with her bright spirit, compelled her to look at them and acknowledge that mayhap there was more blue than she thought, only she had got into the way of letting her eye rest on the gray,—and a very bad way it was.

Alas ! who amongst us cannot remember times when we did likewise ?—refusing to believe that for us summer sunshine would ever again play on hill or

dale, or fall through the glimmering green leaves, or that the clouds overhead would ever part and let us see the golden glories of the heavens beyond. But, for all that, the sun did shine forth, and calm, rosy, golden sunsets once more filled our souls with peace if not joy; and we caught ourselves again looking up for the rift in the summer clouds through which breaks in wondrous beauty the blue floor of heaven; and though we never ceased to realize that

“There came a mist and drizzling rain,
And life was never the same again,”

still the pillar led on, and the waters of Marah were exchanged for those of Elim, and even in this world our hearts grew glad, if not with our own joys, yet in the reflected ones of others.

And summer had again come round, and despite the aching of many sad hearts, and the cry of sorrow and woe in many parts of the world, the sunshine was resting cheerily on meadow and mountain. And the little twin-girls were running about with as blithe faces and merry laughter as of old, their sorrow forgotten, outwardly at least, and every new-found flower or bright-tinged shell brought to them some new joy.

Pansy loved the bright-hearted children, and

sought carefully not to quench their innocent joy by any look of gloom. And in her heart she confessed she had room for thankfulness. Love and care were bestowed on her by many; and the new inmate of her home, Mrs. Ashburton, proved a loving Christian friend, and, with her little eight-year-old girl Lucy, helped to brighten the deserted house.

One rosy summer day Pansy was walking towards the Manor, glancing every now and then at a letter in her hand from Harry, so full of brotherly love and affection; and a great yearning filled her heart to see again one so dearly loved.

“Keep up heart, Pansy,” he wrote, “and believe God is leading all of us in the right way; and ere long I hope we may meet again. My strength is wonderfully improved. The London doctors think my case a hopeful one. And I can work at the easel now much longer than formerly; and I must tell you a great bit of news. My head of the Greek girl, the same as the one Mr. Bradsley bought, has been much admired; and only this morning Mr. Desborough told me it had been purchased, and handed me the money given for it—a cheque for which I send to you for the use of the little ones. It is not much, but I am so glad to be able to help them, and so relieve you of a little of the expense. Dear Pansy, how much we

all owe to you! I wish I could only see you, to make sure you are not forgetting to put on the magic spectacles, and so see things from the Godward not the earthward side."

She had read so far, and felt cheered in spirit, and constrained to look around her and note the beauties of nature. It was still early morning; dew lay on the shaded bushes and grass, as yet unkissed away by the beams of the sun, which, however, had so far reached them as to make them glisten in diamond-like beauty; and the words of one of Harry's favourite hymns rose to her lips:—

“Morn among the mountains! lovely solitude!
Gushing streams and fountains
Warble, God is good!”

And as she trilled forth the words, echo answered,—

“God is good!”

“Very well sung,” said a voice at her side, which made her turn hastily; “pity there were so few to hear it. Pardon my intrusion, young lady, but may I ask if yonder mansion is the residence of Mr. Percival?”

Pansy answered quietly, “Yes, it is; and I am on my way there, and if you are a stranger here, I will gladly show you the way.”

The gentleman, for such he was, whom she addressed thanked her with a stiff manner of courtesy, and walked beside her with the ease of one accustomed to guide rather than be guided.

Strangers were few in that quiet part of the world, and Pansy's girl-nature became anxious to know where he came from. He was tall and elderly, with the air of a gentleman; but the expression of an otherwise handsome face was marred by a hard look, and the gray eyes shone with a cold light. He carried a small travelling-bag in his hand, and said he had come to spend a few days at the Manor; but, as he was not an expected guest, no one had met him at the station. Whilst he spoke, he looked from time to time keenly at his young companion, scanning her features more closely than was polite; but Pansy's perfect composure and dignity of manner hindered him from plying her with questions, which he plainly desired to do. She was not sorry when they reached the door of the Manor; and giving him a polite bow, she ran up the steps to meet Mabel, just as Mr. Percival came out, and, with a start of surprise, went to greet the stranger.

"Who is he, Mabel?" she asked, as soon as they were out of hearing.

But Mabel said she did not know; she had hardly

seen him right. "Some friend of papa's, apparently, so I'll hear soon enough."

The music-lesson over, Mabel ran downstairs and into the conservatory to pull a lovely moss-rose for Pansy. She did love so to relieve the sombre black of Pansy's dress by some of Nature's lovely ornaments; and now she pleased herself by making a little breast-knot of the beautiful pink bud with its veil of moss, twining round it a spray of the blue lobelia, surrounded by some fronds of the graceful maiden-hair fern; and insisted on Pansy letting her fasten it in with the jet brooch, just below the white crape collar. She had just finished her work, and was declaring Pansy was looking like her old self to-day, when the door opened, and the butler said Mr. Percival would like to see Miss Stanford for a minute in the study.

Pansy rose at once, a flush of wonder on her cheeks; and Mabel was bounding down along with her, when, at the study door, she saw her father, who in a grave voice said,—

"Not you, Mabel. You can go to your mamma in the drawing-room. I wish to see Miss Stanford a minute on business."

Pansy followed him, her heart beating fast, though she hardly knew why.

Sitting at the table, with some open letters before him, was the stranger gentleman. As she entered, he rose and saluted her, a look of admiration crossing his face as he looked at her.

Mr. Percival broke the awkward silence. "Miss Stanford, this is Mr. Bruce of Esk Castle, of whom you have heard. His visit here has relation to yourself."

The blood rose to her forehead, and the room seemed to turn round. She leaned her hand on the back of a chair for support; but after a moment's struggle her strong will conquered, and she said, somewhat proudly, "I will be glad to hear what Mr. Bruce has to say to me."

He looked at her, surprised. He had thought to find a young, impressible girl. He found a self-composed woman, with all the queenly beauty of her mother and the proud spirit of a Bruce.

"This letter tells the nature of my communication;" and he held one towards her.

She read almost as in a dream:—

"HONOURED SIR,—I write, or rather dictate, on my death-bed a letter to you, to testify that your nephew, Mr. Arthur Bruce, my foster-child, shortly before he and his wife set sail for America, came to my cottage,

and told me of the birth of a little girl, asking if I, for the love I bore to him, would take charge of the baby till they had got a settled house in the country where they were going, when they hoped to send for it. He also asked that Mr. Bruce of Esk Castle might be kept in ignorance of the fact of the child being left with me. After some consideration, I consented to the proposal, and received from his arms the baby, then only a couple of months old. With her I got the register of her birth and baptism (both of which I now enclose to you); also a ring, and a gold bracelet with a picture of her mother inside it; and a sum of money, sufficient to keep the child till they sent for her. The baby's name was Selina, called after her own mother.

"Now comes my sin in the matter, of which I sorely repent. After keeping the child about two months, I began to fear that if you or Mrs. Bruce heard I had undertaken the charge of it, you would be displeased, and stop the pension I had received from you for years; and tempted, as I now believe, by Satan, I gave the child to a friend who was going to a village not far distant, and who, on receiving from me a sum of money, undertook to leave the babe at the door of an artist called Mr. Stanford, who, as well as his wife, was said to be kind and loving, not likely to send

away a little foundling to the workhouse; Betty Smith, for such was her name, undertaking not to leave the place till she knew the fate of the child. And to her I intrusted both the child and the ornaments left with her; for Betty, though what we country people call ‘soft,’ was of a kindly nature, and strictly honest: and I must say for her, she sought to turn me from my purpose, and even asked to have the child for her own. But I desired that at least the child should have the chance of a better home than hers.

“The babe was taken in by the Stanfords, and Betty remained long enough in the neighbourhood to hear that it was kindly treated. Shortly after, news reached me of the loss of the vessel in which both Mr. and Mrs. Bruce had sailed for America: for they both went in her, though I have heard since that Mr. Bruce’s having done so was doubted; but that was a mistake, for I received a letter from him on board the vessel, and there can be no doubt that both he and his young wife perished, along with almost the whole of the crew—so the child, if still alive, as I believe, is an orphan. But I have lost trace of the Stanfords, who removed from the north of England about four years after the babe was taken in by them; and Betty Smith, always ‘soft,’ has lately got so wrong in her

head, that one can scarce trust her words, but she sometimes says she has seen the child, now grown a fine-looking young lady, in a place far, far from here.

"Now, honoured sir, I pray you to do what you can to find out Mr. Arthur's child, and see justice done her; and may God forgive me for the part I acted in the matter! This letter I intrust to a friend, to be given to you at my death."

Pansy read it all half-bewildered; then, turning to Mr. Bruce, said, "I stand then in the presence of my father's uncle?"

Stiffly he bent his head, replying, "You do."

"And my mother's name?" she asked eagerly.

"Selina," was the only reply vouchsafed.

"I know; but her maiden surname?"

"That I think it best at present to withhold from you. Sufficient for you to know she was of good parentage, though it was no ways a suitable match for a Bruce of Esk Castle. But my time is short; I find I have business which will take me from here to-morrow, though I hope to return again for a couple of days in a week, and my intention is to take you home with me. My wife and I are, as you know, childless, and you will have a kind reception, and be treated as a child of our own, as your father was

until, in a moment of madness, he disobeyed my express commands; but the past, as regards him, will be forgotten, and certainly not visited on his child. I expect, therefore, that on my return you will be ready to accompany me to Scotland. As regards the family of him who was kind to you, I will not fail to see in what way the expense they incurred in your upbringing can be repaid."

Pansy was crimson now with a varied rush of emotion. "I hardly understand your wishes," she said. "My little twin-sisters are almost entirely dependent on me for support, and wholly so for love. My home, wherever that may be, must be *theirs* also. The love and tenderness lavished on me by their parents, when my own discarded me, shall, God helping me, be given by me to them as long as I live. If you desire me to live with you, they must live also."

She drew herself up proudly as she spoke, and Mr. Bruce felt she meant every word she uttered. But he in his way was as firm as herself.

"Impossible, girl," he said. "You must see how absurd a proposal you make,—that Mrs. Bruce and I should consent to receive two children who have no claim on us, as well as you, is altogether out of the question. Once again, in Mr. Percival's presence, I repeat my offer to take you, Arthur Bruce's only

child, to live with myself and wife at Esk Castle, where you will in all respects be treated as if you were a child of our own, and at my death be left well provided for, if not heiress to all that part of the property that is not under male entail ; I promising, at your most natural wish, to give a sum of money to the family of those who brought you up, allowing you from time to time to see them, and hold intercourse with them by letters. On the other hand, should you refuse to accept this offer, I tell you plainly we will have nothing more to do with you. You can do as you please ; but you will receive no help from me or mine. I say this unwillingly, for, despite his faults, I loved your father, and he loved me, and I would gladly show a kindness to his orphan child ; for I must tell you one thing, that letter you have just read was kept back from me, and only came into my hands a fortnight ago, having been found by your father's cousin, the Mr. Bruce whom you saw here, and who kindly interested himself in you, and went to the old nurse's village, and, after much trouble, discovered this letter in an old box that she had left in the possession of a neighbour. Now, make your decision ; but beware. I give you an hour to think over it."

Pansy bent her head for one moment. She was no

perfect being, as we have seen, and the prospect held out to her was, as far as this world goes, a very attractive one. Besides, she felt her grand-uncle had a sort of right to her. One earnest cry to God for help and guidance, then vividly before her eyes rose the quiet churchyard where rested the remains of her much-loved supposed mother, and the vow made there. She quickly raised her head.

"I *have* decided," she said. "Nothing save death shall part me from my twin-sisters till they are called to fill homes of their own. They have none save me to act a mother's part to them. I dare not leave them. Forgive me, uncle, if I seem to you to act wrongly; I could do nothing else."

He rose passionately. "Farewell, then," he said; "all will be as if we had never met." And, without a word, he left the room.

Pansy was alone, and she sank on a chair, and burst into a fit of crying. "Mother, mother," she said, "your little ones shall never cease to have all the love I can give lavished on them. I have kept my vow." Then, in a more subdued tone she prayed: "O loving Jesus, help me and strengthen me for whatever is before me. Give me thy grace to train these little ones for thee, and enable me never to repent of the step I have taken to-day."

She lay still, worn out by her emotion, when she felt a gentle hand laid on her shoulder, and Mrs. Percival stood beside her.

"Poor child," she said, "it must have been hard to do; but, Pansy, my mother's heart tells me you have acted rightly. I can truly thank God my Mabel has such a friend."

And that evening, when Pansy sobbed out the whole story to her loved friend, Miss Kezia, that gentle lady drew her to her arms in a loving embrace, and said, "I knew it would be so, dear heart; and the good God, I do believe, from his throne above, is saying to thee this night, 'Well done.' May these little ones be to thee in the great day a crown of joy and rejoicing."

CHAPTER XIII.

M.R. BRADSLEY'S RETURN.

"This strange, sad world is but our Father's school;
All chance and change his love shall grandly overrule."



"**H**ARRY, are you sure you have not been over-tasking your strength lately?" said Mrs. Desborough to the young artist, one summer day shortly after the one we write of in the last chapter. "You certainly look ill to-day."

Harry smiled. "Oh no, Mrs. Desborough, I am all right; only this letter from dear Miss Kezia has quite overpowered me. Pansy is truly a noble girl, but I fear she has sacrificed herself for the good of my little sisters. May God reward her for it! Read all, dear friend. There's no secret from my second mother;" and he put the letter into her hand.

It told all. Only from Miss Kezia would Harry ever have heard a word of Pansy's sacrifice; but she told also how Pansy really seemed within the last few

days to have brightened in spirits, and to be taking a greater interest in all things than she had done for long. Only one thing preyed on her mind,—the desire to know who her mother had been, and if any of her relations were still alive. Clara and Ethel were well and happy, all unconscious of Pansy's sacrifice for them.

Mrs. Desborough was much moved as she read the letter. "She must be a rare girl, this dark-eyed Pansy," she said. "Such love is a quality not often to be met with. We must get her to London, Harry, and see what can be done to lighten her work."

Harry's eyes shone with pleasure at the very idea, but his well-disciplined mind did not entertain too eagerly a hope which he feared many obstacles would prevent the realization of.

"How much I should like it," he said; "but at present there is no call for her to leave Weyford. We must wait the moving of the pillar-cloud, must we not?"

Mrs. Desborough smiled. "I suppose so, Harry; one cannot have all they wish. But at least I am glad that the cloud distinctly went before you, and found out a place for you to dwell in; and I am doubly glad it rested on this house. Both my husband and myself owe much to you already, dear boy."

He gave her a look of fondest affection. "Speak rather of the help and comfort you have both been to the orphan boy. Did I tell you that Mr. Desborough thinks he has got a purchaser for my other picture,—*Children on the Beach?*"

And so those two talked on, with all the love and common interest of mother and son. God had indeed guided the boy, who clung to him with such a full trust and love, into a pleasant home, where he was letting his light shine so clearly in his daily walk and conversation, that more than one inmate in that home, where hitherto God had been too much forgotten, were learning to trust in and glorify the Lord.

And Pansy was lighter in heart than she had been since Mr. Stanford's death; more certain that the right step had been taken, though Mr. Vernon had written a letter of disapproval. He thought she had acted too hastily, and felt grieved that, as her guardian, she had not consulted him before deciding. Some compromise might have been made, he thought. At all events, Mr. Bruce might have agreed to give her a longer time to make up her mind on the subject.

Pansy shed some tears over the letter; but still she felt she had acted in the right way. And then

Mr. Bruce had *not* put it in her power to consult Mr. Vernon ; and she found herself anxiously asking what Stanley would think. Would he see in the step she had taken only a return to her old spirit of pride, in disliking to be helped by her friends ?

Calmly, however, she now put the matter into the hands of the Searcher of all hearts and all motives, and sought more closely than ever to be guided by him alone ; and, true to his promise, he did not leave her long in darkness as regards his dealings.

Autumn was come (showering its stores of golden fruits on the earth, and covering the whole of nature with its robe of many colours ; here and there dipping its brightly-coloured tints on shrubs, and trees, and lowly-growing plants, crimsoning the leaves of the low-spreading oaks, and imparting a golden hue to the fern fronds ; touching some of the taller trees with ruby colour, and the many rich and varied hues of brown and russet, which tell of decay underlying the blighted tints) when the news came that Mr. Bradsley was returning to the vicarage.

Mrs. Edwards arrived the night before, and by early morn the next day Pansy went to see her.

Their meeting was a sad one ; the remembrance of all that had passed since last they met overcame

Pansy. And Mrs. Edwards had much to tell of the change that had come on her master, who, although much better, was greatly altered from what he had been. "Ah," she said, "my poor master has never been the same since the death of a much-loved sister many years ago; she bore the same name as you, miss,—she was called Selina; she was drowned, it is believed."

Why had Pansy flushed crimson and trembled so she could hardly stand? A veil suddenly fell from her eyes; the story Stanley had told her one day of the death of Mr. Bradsley's young sister rose vividly to her remembrance, and she knew now who her mother had been; but she mastered her emotion, and only asked Mrs. Edwards' leave to put some flowers she carried in a basket in her hand into his study, to brighten it up for his reception.

How gladly she did this now! If, as she believed, he were indeed her mother's brother, what joy it would be to minister to his wants and comfort, and yet fulfil her duty to the children of those who had acted the parents' part to her. Skilfully she set to work; her bouquet was mostly composed of leaves and berries, but these she arranged with a true artistic taste. Here and there she placed little glasses with the bright glossy leaves of the evergreen oak mixed

with crimson and golden ones; and over the dark oaken frames of some of his cherished pictures she flung sprays of ivy intermingled with the brilliant berries of the barberry; and in the gloomiest part of the room she placed great bunches of the flame-coloured hips of the white rose.

Mrs. Edwards, coming in to light a fire, started back and held her hands up with surprise at the change in the Brown Room, as she always designated it.

"Well, now, miss, if you ben't the cleverest young lady with your fingers I ever seed. The room's just like a picture. It'll cheer the master to see it. It has not looked like this since Miss Selina herself used to deck it up. Well, but it is strange the look that those bit wild berries and leaves do give to a place! But there, I do declare the carriage will be here in no time, and the fire not lighted!"

Pansy lingered a while talking to her old friend, and watching the glow of the firelight as it sparkled on all around. As they spoke the carriage came, and Pansy would fain have got out of the way, but some feeling kept her still. She had a right, she felt, to welcome the lonely man to his house.

He started back as he saw the bright young face, so like the one ever present to his eyes, that was

raised to greet him ; and the changed look of the room also struck him. This, he felt, was a pleasant home-coming. Mrs. Edwards would never have thought of such a welcome ; this must have been the kindly thought of some young heart and skilful hand.

His greeting over, Mrs. Edwards bustled off to prepare refreshment for the traveller, leaving the two alone. Pansy made a movement as if to go, but she seemed spell-bound ; she must know all ere she left the room. She had thrown off her hat, and stood with it slung across her arm, the firelight flashing on her dark glossy hair.

“ To whose kind thought and skill do I owe this ? ” he said, pointing to a wreath of the oak leaves and berries over a lovely head of the Madonna and Child which was above the mantelpiece.

In a voice almost choked with emotion, she said, “ To Selina Bruce.”

He turned hastily, almost angrily,—was she playing with him ? “ What do you mean ? ” he said—“ what do you know of Selina Bruce ? ”

Her courage had come back now—his agitation had told her she was right. With head erect and softened eyes, she said, “ I am her daughter.”

“ You ! ”

from the one who had for many years been a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus ; and through his instrumentality both Mabel and Pansy became acquainted with many of the poor people in the neighbourhood, and became his helpers in works of love and charity.

Yes ; Mabel was daily learning that life was given to her for higher purposes than her own pleasure, and was earnestly seeking to become a faithful steward of the wealth God had bestowed on her.

Harry, too, rejoiced with a glad heart when he heard that Pansy had found an uncle in their old friend Mr. Bradbury.

“ Truly,” he wrote, “ you and I can see the kindness and care of God in his dealings with us. Step by step has he gone before us, leading us in the right way. Surely it was he who went before us in guiding my father as to the choice of a place, when we left our old home, where he had prepared friends whom we knew not ; and in no other spot, probably, would you have come in contact with Mr. Bruce, or have found out your mother’s brother. Praise the Lord, Pansy, and forget not all his benefits. Even on earth we can sometimes see that ‘ all things work together for good to them that love God.’ If you should ever doubt it, sister Pansy, put on the magic spectacles and look up.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONFLICT.

"Hush ! oh, hush ! for the Father portioneth as he will
To all his beloved children, and shall they not be still?
Is not his will the wisest? is not his choice the best?
And in perfect acquiescence is there not perfect rest?"



COUPLE of years have passed since Mr. Stanford's death, and Christmas has come again. A calm hallowed one—solemn memories of the former ones interwoven with the bright hopes of youth, and the sweet, ever-new joys which form a part, as it were, of that season which so many believe to be the time of the Saviour's birth.

True, the Stanfords' circle was a broken one now: the father's loved form and cheerful voice were away; and in more than one heart there was a secret yearning for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that was still." But, notwithstanding, merry voices were heard, and the childish laughter was unchecked round the Christmas-tree which blazed

and glittered in Pansy and the twins' new home. New! yes, for Rockbeach Cottage was let a month before to new-comers. Mrs. Ashburton and her little girl had gone to the south of France, and Pansy and the little twins had taken up their abode with Mr. Bradsley.

How it all came about Pansy never knew. She had a fight with her old enemy, pride. What! become dependent on her uncle, whose means were not large? Never! And also ask him, or rather accept his proposal, to let his home be also that of Ethel and Clara—of course he knew she would not be separated from them—oh, it was impossible! But quietly she found her every objection removed, her mighty obstacles thrown down, her impossibilities made exceedingly possible; and, backed by Miss Kezia, the vicar won the day, and Pansy, with a joy of heart that startled her, found herself and her little charges fairly ensconced, a week before Christmas, as inmates of her uncle's home.

Bright days had come for the lonely bachelor: a bright young face sat at the top of his table, sweet young voices rung through the empty rooms, and little feet pattered up and down the stairs, finding their way into old Mrs. Edwards' room—and heart as well; and at morning and evening worship young

voices swelled the hymns of praise that rose to the ear of God.

In one thing Pansy had her way. She had so far to yield as to allow her uncle to give her the yearly allowance he had so gladly given to her mother, but she must still work to help Harry with the little ones; and her three hours' teaching at the Manor was continued, to Mabel's great delight. So, what with her housekeeping duties and her daily instructing of the little ones, she was not idle; while Mr. Bradsley found his greatest pleasure in giving her regular instruction in languages and literature. At present, the pillar-cloud seemed to have led her to an oasis in the desert of life, and there to let her rest for a while by "still waters," and "lie down in green pastures."

And Christmas eve had come again. Pansy had just finished dressing the little ones for the early tea, to precede the gathering round the Christmas-tree. Very pretty they looked in their new frocks of scarlet merino trimmed with swan's-down, and finished off with black sashes and shoulder-knots—all of which were presents from kind Mrs. Desborough to Harry's twin-sisters. And Pansy herself was standing now before the looking-glass, brushing out her long black hair, pausing often, as if indulging in some day-dream, a half-smile on her lips—going over,

in fact, again and again the pleasant surprise of the previous day, when, as she was going from the vicarage into the little church, with a basket full of holly and other evergreens on her arm, a firm hand had been laid on her shoulder, and she turned hastily, to see her old friend Stanley Vernon home at last. In her surprise the basket fell, and the holly and the evergreens lay scattered around ; and in the business of picking them up, with exclamations of dismay at the numbers of bright berries which strewed the road, the first shock of the meeting was over.

Once again Pansy felt the sense of rest in leaning on Stanley's strong arm, and the repose of relying on his clear judgment and sterling common sense.

Her meditations were broken by Mabel (who was to join the party) rushing in, bearing as usual a basket of flowers in her hand. Indeed, Mr. Bradsley had declared Mabel and flowers were synonymous terms.

"Just in time, Pansy," she said, "to deck you up a bit. Here now, sit down and let me fasten your hair for you *& la mode*; and take your choice of these flowers, and I will put them in nicely for you."

"Thanks, Mabel; but I do like to dress my hair in my own fashion. Thanks for the flowers; they are exquisite—far too much so for me. How nice you

will act the part of *bonne!* Help me with my dress; for uncle likes me to be punctual, and the tea is nearly ready."

So, amid much pleasant railly, the dressing proceeded.

Pansy had not yet laid aside the black silk for evening wear; but this Christmas she brightened herself a little. A small box lay open before her, containing some presents given to her by Stanley some hours before. "Wear them to-night," he had said, with a pleading look; and she had consented, though with a pang. Ah, who does not know the pain of putting on a bright colour after wearing mourning for the dead! It is almost as if we were doing dishonour to our loved ones, or saying outwardly we have ceased to mourn, while all the time our hearts are bleeding still.

Pansy felt it keenly when, having fastened on the collar of rich lace, she undid a small scarf of exquisitely fine scarlet china-crape. She shook it out, hardly noticing Mabel's exclamation of "What a beauty, Pansy! and how well it suits you!"—and skilfully folding it, she put it as a narrow band round her neck, letting it fall in wide ends below the collar, where she fastened it with a small mourning-brooch. One other present lay in the box—a string

of red coral beads to match the scarf. Mabel seized them eagerly.

"Now, Pansy, not a word; these are the very things you need. See here!" And, despite resistance, she twisted them round the heavy plaits which Pansy wore across her head.

The scarf and corals brightened her up wonderfully; and one pure white Christmas-rose, with its glossy leaves, fastened at the side of the hair, completed her coiffure.

Just as the dressing had come to an end, Mabel, who was looking fairy-like in her pale blue cashmere dress, with a Christmas-rose in her hair and at her belt, suddenly remembered she had a letter for Pansy.

"It is from Scotland, Pansy; and from our Mr. Bruce, I am sure, for I know his handwriting."

Pansy took it, wondering what he could write to her about. Whilst she read it, Mabel ran off to take some flowers to Miss Kezia and Mr. Bradsley. The letter was as follows:—

"DEAR MISS BRUCE,—You will, I hope, excuse the liberty I take in writing to you; but as the daughter of Arthur Bruce, I feel that you ought to know that Mr. Bruce of Esk Castle is seriously ill. He has

never been the same man since his wife's death, a year ago ; but for nearly four weeks he has been confined to bed, having lost power down his left side. His mind is quite acute ; and the doctor thinks he may not turn worse for some time. He is very lonely—entirely dependent on servants ; for I can only leave my home-duties and my young wife for an hour or two at a time. Once or twice he has expressed a strong desire to see Arthur's child once more. Will you think over the matter ? Circumstances have, I understand, changed since you refused to live with him without your little sisters—a step that I think was at that time a right and noble one. I say no more ; save that, as one of Arthur's greatest friends, I know, had he stood in your place now, how he would have acted.—Your sincere friend,

"CHARLES BRUCE."

Pansy stood bewildered. What should she do ? Leave her happy home and her loved ones, to go to a solitary, out-of-the-way country-house, to tend an old man for whom she had no liking ? Oh, it was impossible ! She could not do it. She had no call to do so—she had been *led* so plainly into her new happy home. Oh no ! it could not be. She would think no more about it. He had cast her off ; and

so— But she could not finish the sentence even in her mind; instead, other words—not at all applicable, she said—rose to her lips: “Even Christ pleased not himself.”

Just then the tea-bell rang; and thrusting the letter into her desk, she ran downstairs, meeting the little ones full of childish glee at the door. And so, holding one by each hand, she entered the room, and greeted Miss Kezia and two or three other friends who made up the party.

The evening passed pleasantly. Christmas carols were sung; the tree blazed with light, and presents of all sorts were given; and merry laughter from the little ones echoed around. But Pansy's smiles were only surface ones. A great conflict was being carried on in her heart: duty and inclination were each in turn, like good and evil spirits, talking within her. Through the glitter of the blazing light she saw a lonely old man dying without a friend near him to comfort and cheer; and above the loud voices and merry laughter around her she seemed to hear a voice saying,—“This is the way; walk ye in it. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”

Once or twice Stanley's eye rested searchingly on her; he saw something was amiss.

“She is thinking of dear Mr. Stanford,” whispered

Miss Kezia, as she caught Stanley's look of sympathy.

"Very natural," said Mr. Bradsley, who had caught the words, and also thought his dark-eyed Pansy unlike herself that evening. Only Stanley spoke not. That look was not one of grief for the dead, but of some conflict in the heart about a present duty or anticipated trial.

The happy evening finished with prayer and praise. When Mr. Bradsley thanked God for the mercies that crowned his lot that Christmas eve—alluding to his filled home—Stanley distinctly heard a suppressed sob, and knew it came from Pansy's breast.

As they said "good night," Charlie Stanford—whom Stanley had brought with him from Mr. Vernon's to spend the Christmas holidays—said: "How happy you must be here, Pansy! Mr. Bradsley is so kind, and fond of you and the twins."

She stooped to kiss him. "Yes, Charlie; too happy, I think. But it may not be for long."

Just then Stanley came forward: "Good night, Pansy. It has indeed been a pleasant evening. You have got a happy home—a quiet resting-place. It reminds me of Christian and Hopeful resting in the green meadows by the River of Life, where they ate all manner of choice fruits."

She turned hastily at the words, as if they had struck some passing chord.

"Perhaps so. But you remember they were not allowed to remain long there, but were called to take a rough, untrodden path. It seemed hard, did it not?"

Her eager look told in part of the conflict within, and gave Stanley a clue, though an imperfect one, to the cause of her altered manner.

"It might seem it," he said; "but God's guidance can never be so in reality. And you remember what sore trouble they fell into by choosing a soft path of their own devising. They failed to put on the magic spectacles then, Pansy, did they not? They made a grand mistake at that time, by thinking they could judge better than God what was the right way for them. We must pray never to do that in our life-journey."

"Pansy, Pansy, do come away!" said her uncle. "It is time we were all in bed, for we must be early astir on Christmas morning.—Good night, Stanley."

And so saying, the vicar hurried them off; and ere long most of the inmates of the quiet vicarage were sunk in sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

ESK CASTLE.

" Oh for a light from heaven,
 Clear and divine,
 Now on the path before me
 Brightly to shine !
 Oh for a hand to beckon !
 Oh for a voice to say,
 ' Follow in firm assurance,—
 This is the way.' "



THE morning dawned bright and cold; snow sprinkled the ground and silvered the trees; but the sunshine promised to be bright; and already, when Pansy, with a warm cloak around her, went for a turn in the garden, the snow was yielding to the influence of the sun, and here and there drops from the icicles which hung from the eaves of the house were glistening with rainbow hues.

She had had a restless night; but though in her heart she was convinced as regarded the path she ought to take, she had scarcely made up her mind to do so.

Breakfast over, the little ones were dressed, and the

party got ready for church. It was still early, and Stanley proposed that he and Pansy should set off before the others, taking a longer round, promising, however, to meet them at the church door.

The walk was a charming one; the air was cold and frosty; sunshine sparkling on all around. At first the two spoke little, or on subjects of small importance. At last Stanley said,—

“Pansy, what is wrong with you? Even the hallowed memories of the day have failed to give you back your usual look. Can I be of any use to you? If so, tell me. Our time is short.”

She took the letter from her pocket and put it into his hand.

“Read it, Stanley,” she said, in a voice that trembled with emotion.

He did so, she watching him eagerly as he read.

When he had finished, she queried, “Well?”

The firm look she knew so well crossed his face as he answered, “Of course, there can be only one answer to such a letter.”

“What?” she said hastily.

“That you will come as soon as possible. Poor old man, how lonely he must be!”

“But, Stanley, how can I go? Think of the children, and my kind uncle; and then my vow.”

"Mr. Bradsley will be grieved, I am sure. As to the children, they are well taken care of by Mrs. Edwards, who loves them dearly. As to your vow, Pansy, it was one that should never have been made; though the step you took—refusing to leave the twins when Mr. Bruce would not receive them—was, I think, at the *time*, a right one. But now it is quite different. This visit will only be for a time; and Mr. Bradsley has made a home for the little girls as well as for you, and will tend them carefully in your absence. Plainly the pillar-cloud has gone before you; this call is of the Lord. The path may be an uphill one, but it is the *right* one; and if you fail to follow it, you will bring deserved trouble on yourself. Only think in what a plight an Israelite would have found himself had he refused to follow when the cloud moved: away from God, in the desert, without a guide; in the scorching sun, without the cool shade of the pillar-cloud, by day; and at night in darkness, without its fiery light to illuminate it! Nay, Pansy, let no love of ease turn you away from the path of duty. Think on the example of Jesus. And what if God use you to point the soul of your father's uncle to Jesus?"

"O Stanley, it is hard to leave my home when I had just regained one, and go alone amongst strangers!"

He drew her arm within his own, as in former times.

“Poor Pansy!” he said; “do you think I want to compel you to go, and so shorten the brief visit I hoped to have paid you?—though I too have ere long to enter on a new path. You know, in three months I hope to have a curacy in the east of London, and begin work among the destitute ones there; but when you and I enlisted as soldiers in the army of the Great King, did we say we would only serve in the easy places? and when the Captain of our salvation directed us to go where he wished us posted, refuse, because the place was not to our liking and of our own choosing? Nay, Pansy, not so. Do we not pray daily that we may do God’s will on earth as it is done in heaven? My brave Pansy, God is calling you, I do believe, to a post of honour; look up and see his guiding hand.”

They had reached the church door, and joined the waiting party.

Through the first part of the service I fear Pansy’s thoughts wandered; but not for long. She became quieted, and her soul was drawn heavenward. Mr. Bradsley’s sermon was a short one, but every word told; for he spoke in the power of the Holy Ghost, and as one who had tasted of a Saviour’s love. He

spoke of Jesus coming as a babe into the world, making himself of no reputation, and becoming as a servant for us ; his whole life, from the cradle to the cross, being one of self-denial, leaving us an example that we too should deny ourselves and take up our cross. “ Do we do so ? We cannot follow him in his wonderful atoning death—that cup he only could drink ; but we are called on to show our gratitude for his death for us by denying ourselves for his sake and the sake of our fellow-creatures.” He finished with the words of a hymn, which Pansy often in after-days recalled :—

“ A pilgrim through this lonely world
Our blessed Saviour passed ;
A mourner all his life was he,
A dying lamb at last.
Such was our Lord ; and shall we fear
The cross with all its scorn,
Or love a faithless, evil world
That crowned his brow with thorns ? ”

When she left the church her mind was made up : if Mr. Bradsley and Mr. Vernon consented, she would go to Esk Castle.

Stanley read her resolution in her face, on which a spirit of rest had again become visible.

That very evening she showed her uncle the letter, and asked his consent to her going. At once he saw that her duty was to go. Though he confessed the

trial of parting with her was a great one to him, still he had too long walked with God, and sought to do his will, to seek now his own ease and comfort, when by yielding them he could conduce to the well-being of another. He saw the struggle it cost Pansy to leave him, and he nerved himself to strengthen, not discourage her.

"Of course it will be no permanent arrangement, Pansy. This is your home, and the little girls will help to brighten me in your absence; and ere long we will have you back, and then we won't let you off again so easily."

He tried to speak lightly; but Pansy saw the parting was no small trial to him either.

Loud and many were Mabel's lamentations when she heard the plan. "What shall I do without you, Pansy? Oh, don't go, for you are needed here. And when Mr. Bruce behaved so badly to you, I declare it's a shame to want you now."

"Hush, Mabel," said her friend; "is it not written we should return good for evil? Don't make it harder for me to go than it is, dear. You don't know how I dread leaving you all. You will be kind to the children in my absence, I know; only don't spoil them altogether."

A letter from young Mr. Bruce came. He was

much pleased that Pansy was coming, for the old gentleman was getting worse, but had expressed pleasure at the prospect of seeing his grand-niece, and had ordered all proper preparations to be made for her reception. The carriage would be waiting at the station for her, whenever she could fix the day and hour of her coming.

Pansy shed some tears over this letter; all seemed so fixed now, and the path of duty was *not* a pleasant one to the girl just then. But she had little time to waste in anticipating evils, for an unexpected opportunity of a friend accompanying her on the journey occurred, as Mr. Percival, whose property was not far from Esk Castle, found his presence was required there for a few weeks. So he gladly offered to escort Pansy to Scotland.

The farewells were over at last. Stanley had started the previous day; and Miss Kezia, who at first had mourned over the loss of her favourite, even for a short time, had come to see that the pillar-cloud had indeed gone before: and "Selina, child," she said, "I have for some months had a concern on my spirit for the soul of this old man. Mayhap the Lord may make thee the instrument of guiding him to the foot of the Cross. He uses humble things to do his will, and 'threshes high mountains with a

worm Jacob.' His blessing go with thee, as with Jacob of old ; and may thou be brought in safety back to thine own people. The best of journeying mercies go with thee."

And so Pansy was off on her first flight from the home-nest, leaving the little ones grieving and wondering why sister Pansy should go away. But she went followed by many prayers and the love of many hearts.

The journey was a long one; and it was the second day after their departure ere they reached the station of Esktown, and found Mr. Charles Bruce waiting for them. Mr. Percival had to turn off in a different direction there, so he bade Pansy farewell; promising, however, to call at the Castle on his way home, and find how she got on; Mr. Bruce undertaking to introduce her to her new abode.

It was a January day, and snow lay on the ground. The sun was just setting as they neared the Castle, bars of crimson glory spanning the sky where, near the horizon, the leaden clouds were broken, and, now touched with the glories of the sun's last beams, came rolling up westward in masses whose appearance betokened more snow. The country was mostly pastoral; the hills, high but smooth, in outline somewhat rounded. Here and there the road led close by

the sea, which lay darkly before them, save where a golden ripple touched the waves. Nearer the Castle there was a good deal of wood,—fine old trees, whose leafless branches were now white with snow. A long avenue led up to the Castle,—an old-fashioned, gray, heavy-looking building, so unlike the sunny Welsh vicarage that Pansy's heart shrunk ; the very look of grandeur appalled her.

A number of servants came to the door to welcome them. Several of them had been there for long, and were glad to see a child of Mr. Arthur (who had been a great favourite) come amongst them. The old housekeeper led her in, bidding her heartily welcome, and saying the laird was wearying sore to see her.

Accompanied by Mr. Bruce, she went at once to his room ; and the eager welcome he gave her, coupled with his worn-out look and attenuated frame, went to her heart, and made her rejoice she had followed the call of duty rather than that of self-pleasing inclination. And when, worn out with her long journey, she lay down to rest in a stately room, she was able from her heart to thank God for having led her to the gray Castle, where she felt there was work for her to do, though there might be much connected with it that was trying to body and spirit.

CHAPTER XVI

A RICH REWARD.

"Who so is wise, and all His works
With watchful care discern,
The loving-kindness of the Lord
They, even they shall learn."



WEEKS rolled on, and Pansy Bruce was at the Castle still. April had almost merged into May; the hedges were dressed in the fresh livery of spring, and the fruit-trees in the old-fashioned garden were covered with pink and white blossom; little lambs were sporting on the hill-sides, and the joyous song of birds was heard around. All nature was being renewed by the hand of the great Creator, and every bursting bud and flower were saying to the understanding eye and heart, "It is the Lord."

But in the Castle, life, as regards this world, was decaying; spring brought no renewal of it to the master of all the broad domains around. It was evident even to an inexperienced eye that ere long

the place that had so long known him would know him no more for ever. He lay mostly in bed now, only asking from time to time to be moved on a couch to the window, that he might gaze once more on the scenes so familiar to his eyes from childhood. Only one pleasure he seemed to have now in life, and that was the society of his grand-niece. When she entered the room a bright smile of welcome ever crossed his face; and in his most restless hours the very touch of her gentle hand seemed to soothe him, and her rich sweet voice many a night hushed him to sleep, as it had often done her baby-sisters.

Yes, Pansy's life was not an easy one there, for the old man's love was a very exacting one, and day after day, ay, and often night after night, would find her for hours sitting beside him, laying aside her girlish pursuits and loved occupations to talk or read to him; but there was no word of complaint, and, better still, no spirit of rebellion about it. Pansy was getting the very discipline she needed. At first she had struggled against it, her old enemy Pride rising when she found herself almost compelled to receive handsome presents of all kinds from the old man, and obliged to give up the right of working to help her little sisters. But when she saw the pain it gave the suffering man when she refused his gifts, and the pleased look when

she accepted them, however ungraciously, she came to see that her refusing to do so was only from pride and selfishness in a latent form, and so submitted to the trial as a cross given her to bear; and even from time to time, at Mr. Bruce's urgent request, sending presents purchased with his money to Clara and Ethel.

Loving letters came from the vicarage, and from dear Miss Kezia and Harry; letters full of love and good counsel, that cheered her in her lonely life, though they seemed to give her a renewed longing for home.

Stanley, too, wrote often. The longed-for curacy was his at last. He had sought for no post of ease, and certainly had not got one. Among the most destitute of London poor his lot was cast, but he was glad it was so. To tell these neglected children of sin of a God of love, of a living, loving Saviour who cared for and thought of them, was his greatest joy; and even in the first month of his labour among them he could write to Pansy of sad crushed hearts that were learning to love the name of Jesus, and of little children, old in sin, who were beginning to welcome his appearance amongst them. And Pansy, as she read, grew interested in his interests, learned to know the names of the streets he worked in, and pictured

to herself, from his vivid descriptions, some of his poor, half-starved, outcast friends.

"It is hard work, Pansy, but each step is something gained. You and I are climbing the steep path of experience now; let us not faint nor be discouraged though we slip back now and then—a strong hand is holding us up. Let our motto be 'Excelsior!'"

And in one letter he told his hope that when God saw good they might climb the hill together. "Give me some hope, Pansy, that this too is your desire."

And that was the way in which Stanley told his constant love of years. Very unromantic, say you; far too cool and composed? Ah well, it may be. We write no sentimental love-tale; but, for all that, though these two had never spoken of love in a trifling or constant way, from infancy their hearts had been so closely united that words of love seemed unnecessary.

Pansy knew well, had known long, that for her there was in all the world but *one*—Stanley; that his words helped her as no other person's did; that one half-hour of his presence was more to her than hours of any other: so she found no difficulty in answering that she was sure he had long ago guessed that to climb the hill of life with him was her greatest earthly desire, should his father and Mr. Bradsley

consent when the time came. She knew that that time could not be for yet a while, but they were both young, and could wait.

Of course it was all very prosaic, but for all that *very real*; and we know that after the receiving of that letter the gray old Castle seemed suddenly to grow bright, as if illuminated with summer sunshine, though that day rain was falling fast, and a real Scotch “haur” hiding the distant landscape. But Pansy heeded it not, and the lonely feeling fled away, till even Mr. Bruce asked her what change had come over her. And somehow, though he never said so, he connected the brightness with the letter she had received from the friend of whom she often spoke,—Stanley Vernon; and from that day he interested himself more in everything she told of him, even leading her unconsciously to speak of him.

“ Dear heart, but ye are looking bonnie the day,” said Mrs. Grant, the housekeeper, as one of the bright April days we have written of found Pansy standing at the open window of the pretty parlour appropriated for her use.

She was drinking in the beauty of the scene which lay stretched before her,—the sea lying beyond the Castle park sparkling under the spring sunshine.

“ Well, *this* is bonnie, at all events, Mrs. Grant,” she

said. "How all nature has broken into life within these last few days!"

"Ay, ay, miss; but the life o' the dear maister is ebbin' awa'; div ye no see it?"

Pansy looked up with a face of distress. "You don't think him much worse, do you? The doctor has said nothing to me about any marked change; but oh, Mrs. Grant, though the natural man is decaying, don't ye think there is life begun in the soul?"

"'Deed yes, that's true. The Word o' God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is doing in his soul just what the spring sunshine is doing in the world o' nature—breaking the sleep o' death, and causing the fruit o' righteousness to appear. The maister was taught the truth frae his earliest days; but though he was aye a kind maister to me, and a guid laird to his people, he lived far frae the Lord. But he has been brought nigh now, I'm thinkin', through the blood o' Jesus; and, miss, it's you that the Lord has used as the instrument of opening his eyes to the truth. The laird told me sae himsel' this very day; and 'deed it's tae mair than him that your comin' here has proved a blessin'. You'll be sadly missed when you gang awa'."

At these words Pansy's heart gave thanks to God. Gladly could she think now of the way that the Lord

had led her in bringing her to the old Castle where her father had lived. Truly could she say that “loving-kindness and tender mercies had been mixed in every bitter drop she had drunk in the cup of life.”

After that day Mr. Bruce gradually became weaker; and his cousin, feeling that Pansy should not be left to tend him alone, came oftener, sometimes bringing his wife with him, and remaining for a week at a time—insisting on Pansy’s taking more out-of-door exercise, for the long confinement to a sick-room was telling on her health and spirits.

Very pleasant were some of the rambles she and Mr. Bruce took together in those May days, climbing the neighbouring hills, and exploring the beauties of the ferny dells; visiting many of the cottages, where Pansy received a warm welcome from the old “bodies,” who remembered and had dearly loved Mr. Arthur, and many of his deeds of kindness and generosity were rehearsed to his daughter. The simple faith and deep knowledge of Bible truths of many of these poor people helped and surprised the girl, who knew little of the Scottish character and training. And many a heartfelt blessing rested on her head as she left their humble cottages, blessings which she felt came not only from the lips but from the heart.

Towards the end of June the change came. The few previous days had been very trying ones to the young girl. The old man's sufferings had been hard to witness, and never had she felt so strongly as then the need of the magic spectacles,—for earthward all seemed gloomy ; but from above light came.

At the close of a sultry summer day, just when, ere it set, the sun had broken through the thick haze for the first time, and shed a glory of light around, the old man lay quiet for a while ; then drawing, with a feeble grasp, Pansy to his side, he whispered,—

“ Bless you, my child, for all you have done to an old man. I'm going now to Jesus. Say again, ‘Let not your heart be troubled.’ ”

With a trembling voice she went on ; and when she repeated the words, “ I will come again, and take you unto myself,” the spirit passed, a smile rested on the face of the dead man, and a ray of the setting sun came through the half-closed shutter, and played like a halo round his head.

Mr. Charles Bruce stepped forward and closed the eyes, gently raising Pansy from the bed.

“ ‘ Blessed are the dead,’ ” he said, “ ‘ who die in the Lord ; ’ and we can say that of him *now*, Pansy. And it was you whom God honoured to lead him to Jesus. You don't grieve now you came to Esk Castle ? ”

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE EAST OF LONDON.

"Go to my brethren ; say, The Lord hath risen,
And risen but to save.
Tell of the might that breaks the captive's prison,—
Of life beyond the grave."



THE scene changes. The laburnums and lilacs are in full bloom, and the hedges are white with the May, spotlessly so, even in the suburbs of the great metropolis, and the bright garden of a pretty villa (which, with many others, overlooks the heath at Hampstead) is gay with spring flowers ; and through the half-open door of the villa itself one can see that preparations for some festival are going on inside. Baskets of flowers are being carried in, and two fair-haired little girls of about twelve years old are arranging some beautiful ones in pots on each side of the steps which lead from the house to the front garden.

A young, very pretty lady, with rippling golden locks, dressed in white, like the little girls, ran down

the steps from time to time to see the effect of the flowers from the gate. Suddenly a voice from within called "Mabel! Mabel!" and she disappeared indoors.

The little girls looked after her for a moment, then one of them spoke.

"Isn't she pretty, Ethel? and so nice and kind! Not a bit changed from the days she used to come to Rockbeach Cottage in her little phaeton, with the cream-coloured ponies, and take you and me when we were little girls up to the Manor."

"Yes," said the one so appealed to, "she is very pretty and good; but not nearly so much so as sister Pansy. There is nobody in all the world so good as she is; is there, Clara? I only wish Stanley Vernon were not coming to take her away, even although she says her new home is to be ours also, except when we are here with Uncle Bradsley, or living now and then with Harry at the Desboroughs. Isn't it funny, Clara, to have a sort of three homes? though of course sister Pansy's will be our *real* one."

Just then visitors began to arrive, and the twin-sisters (for such they were) ran indoors to see how everything was progressing for the marriage; for this was the wedding-day of Selina Bruce and Stanley Vernon.

Nearly five years have passed since she left Esk

Castle and returned with a glad heart to the vicarage and her loved ones there. But ere many months had elapsed the pillar-cloud had moved again; for Mr. Bradsley's health made it necessary for him to relinquish his charge: and so doing, he took a villa in one of the suburbs of London, whither Pansy and the twins, along with Mrs. Edwards, accompanied him.

Harry was rejoiced when he heard the plan which would once more allow of his three sisters (he wrote) and himself frequently meeting.

For all, the plan did well. Pansy, who had been left, not an heiress, but well off by Mr. Bruce, could now afford to get the advantage of finishing masters, while acting as housekeeper to her loved uncle; and the little twins, whom Mr. Bruce had also remembered in his will, could attend school or have a teacher in the house; and Stanley Vernon was more than pleased when he found himself a welcome visitor at Violet Bank, as Mr. Bradsley had named his new home.

Four happy years were passed there ere Stanley saw his way to claim his bride. Patiently they waited, both working hard the while, gaining in the waiting-time experience in many duties, both of them growing in grace, and daily finding in the common round "room to deny themselves—a road to lead them nearer God."

Many sweet talks Pansy held during those years with Harry Stanford, whose love to and faith in Jesus were growing brighter and stronger every day. Weakly he still was, and would always be; but even through his weakness his was a happy lot. Truly loving his art, it was at once the means of his livelihood and his great enjoyment. Fondly attached to Mr. and Mrs. Desborough, and happy in the society of Pansy, his little sisters, and Mr. Bradsley, useful in many ways to some of the destitute ones in the great city where he lived, and his spirit rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, he could indeed say that goodness and mercy were following him.

And Stanley was a vicar now, his parish still in the east of London, his work still amongst the very poor and amid many of the outcasts of society; but the vicarage, old-fashioned though it was, and far removed from the fashionable part of the town, was a comfortable one, fit for a lady to dwell in who was content with small rooms and plain furniture.

So, with Mr. Vernon and Mr. Bradsley's full consent, the marriage was to take place, the only chord of dissension in the matter being as to which home the twins were to belong,—Mr. Bradsley pleading strongly for them, and Pansy and Stanley putting in their claim; Harry laughingly declaring they might

fight it out as they liked, but by-and-by he meant to set up house for himself, and then he must have his little sisters for housekeepers.

It was a quiet marriage taking place at Violet Bank, as Mr. Bradsley had been for some weeks confined to the house. Mr. Vernon and he were to officiate at it, and Harry claimed the right of giving away the bride. Mabel, Hannah Gurney, and the twins were her four bridesmaids, all dressed in pure white, with wreaths of real hawthorn-blossom on their heads. Mr. and Mrs. Percival were amongst the guests, and dear Miss Kezia, with her sweet smile and her loving helpful words. The Bruces from Esk Castle were there also,—Mr. Charles Bruce, being heir-at-law, having succeeded to the Castle and entailed lands. The Desboroughs and one or two friends of Stanley's, along with the bright young midshipman, Charlie Stanford, completed the party.

Need we say that the bride, in her white silk dress, looked lovely indeed? The old haughty look had long ago left her face, and in its stead was one of trusting love and thoughtfulness.

"Well," said Mrs. Edwards, the evening after the marriage, to her master, as they discussed the events of the day, "if she was not the most beautiful bride I ever saw, and the very image of our Miss Selina!

The Lord's ways are wonderful, sir, are they not ? Just to think o' his having guided her orphan child to our house, and let her brighten up our declining years ; for 'deed, sir, you're younger-like now by ten years than you were when she came, with the dear bits o' lassies, to live with us."

" Yes, Mrs. Edwards, we can truly see love and mercy in the way we have been brought together ; and I feel sure that Selina will have a happy home, and has got a husband who will be a suitable one for her—who will help her in the heavenward path upwards and onwards. May the Lord bless them and keep them, and guide them by his counsel as long as they are in this world, and afterwards receive them to glory ! "

A fortnight after that day found Pansy and her husband in their new home, both eager to begin their work. It was Saturday evening, and they stood at the open window of the sitting-room, which opened out into the old-fashioned garden of the vicarage, gay with flowers, on which the setting sun was showering its parting beams. The view was a limited one ; indeed, just outside the garden-gate the dwellings of the poorest sort were visible, and the church of which Stanley was vicar, surrounded by its old churchyard (seldom, however, used now). But the eyes of the

young couple were well pleased with the view before them. The bright flowers, and the grassy paths, and the shady trees were fair to see ; and overhead the sky was seen, with its crimson cloudlets skiffing before the evening breeze, while the chimes of neighbouring bells were wafted sweetly to the ear.

“ It is so pleasant here, Stanley,” said the young wife, “ one can hardly believe that we are in the midst of the city, and that such scenes of poverty and woe as we know of are being transacted so near us. Yours is a noble work. I am so glad it is amongst the poor of this world we have to work though there is much to depress and discourage us.”

“ Ay, Pansy, there is ; but in the hearts of those deepest sunk in vice there is *some* soft place—some feelings that grace can restore—some eyes which, through all the darkness that surrounds them, have caught a glimpse of the glory beyond—of the land whose streets are gold, and whose gates are of pearl. How thankful I am, my own wife, to have you with me in this work ! God has chosen us to a post of high honour by putting us in one of Satan’s strongest citadels, and commissioning us to lay siege to it in the Saviour’s name. You don’t repent now, Pansy, in view of the life before you, that I was led to refuse the beautiful country vicarage offered me by Lord D——? ”

"No; oh no, Stanley. With so many perishing, desolate souls around us, I could never have felt at ease if thoughts of me had influenced you to give up the work amongst them in which God is blessing you, to seek a life of greater ease and more outward luxury."

Stanley put his arm fondly and protectingly round her as she spoke. "I do thank God, Pansy, that his loving, guiding hand has led us together. Do you remember the day at Arnford, when you first told me of Mr. Stanford's blindness, and you said the path of life looked so dark, you only wished like the Israelites of old you too could see a guiding-pillar?"

She smiled. "Yes, Stanley, I remember it well, and how you bade me put on the magic spectacles."

"Ah, well; and since then have we not both seen God's hand leading us in all times of perplexity, as distinctly as the Israelites saw the pillar?"

Pansy bent her head to hide her tears. "Yes," she replied, "we have; and never was the pillar-cloud so plainly seen as in the dark nights, when it shone like a pillar of fire, clear and light-giving. Not once only, but many times, have I seen it, with the eye of faith; and heard, too, the voice (like the sound of the silver trumpets which had to be heard ere the Israelites could move), saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'"

"And, Pansy, in the life before us we will have to go through dark places as well as bright ones, climb steep hills as well as rest by still waters; and we will need the magic spectacles whilst the journey lasts—need them till faith is changed to fruition, and we see Jesus no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face,—when we will need no more the pillar-cloud, for 'the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne will lead us to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.'"

After these words they were silent for a while. The gray shades of evening had gathered around them while they had been talking, and, wearied out with the long journey of the day, they gathered their little household together, and sought God's blessing on their home, asking that he would make it like one of the "dwellings of Zion, on which the cloud and smoke of his presence rested by day, and a flaming fire by night; and above all, his glory might be their defence."







